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EDITORIAL

LIVE Tests

THIS summer has proved that there are two things seriously wrong with Test cricket. One is the weather and the other is the five-day period for each match.

It is possible to improve both!

Yes, even the weather—for there is no need whatever to play the Third Test at Manchester in July. The sequence of Nottingham, Lord's, Manchester, Leeds and the Oval is not sacred!

Mr. Fred Lee, M.P. for Newton, a former Lancashire cricketer, says: "Had the First Test this year been at Manchester we should have won. But the authorities want a Test in London during Wimbledon."

JULY is notoriously a wet month all along the north-west side of Britain. At Old Trafford last month there were only fourteen and a half hours play in the whole match. It is forty-eight years since an England v. Australia Test was last finished at Manchester.

MR. FRED LEE, M.P.
"We should have won . . ."

The average Manchester rainfall in May is 2.12 in., in June 2.64, in July 3.30, in August 3.45.

So why not play the First Test at Old Trafford, instead of Nottingham, at the end of May or beginning of June, and secure a stronger chance of fine days for it?

Nottingham, farther east, has a far drier climate and might well be the scene of the Third Test in July. Or the later Tests could be concentrated in London, which has only two-fifths of the North-West's rainfall.

Our M.C.C. cricket pontiffs should take a few tips from the weather statistics *and* review the five-day rule, thus giving the paying public a break.

HERE is a plan for brighter Test cricket. Let each match be allotted four days only. Let each innings be allotted one of those days. It will end at 6.30 p.m. however many wickets have fallen. If it ends earlier, the bowling side will get the time added to its own batting period. The side scoring the most runs in the four days would win. (Hours lost by rain would be made up, of course.)

Then each side would have to go out for the runs.

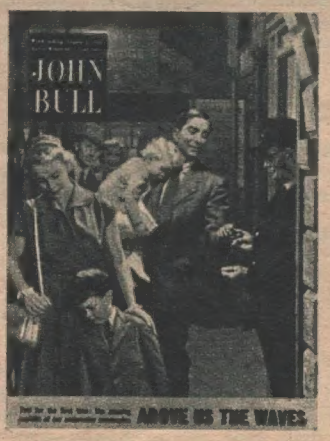
IN the first three five-day Tests this summer, 636 runs were scored for 31 wickets at Nottingham, 1,368 for 37 wickets at Lord's, and 625 for 28 wickets at Manchester.

Does anyone seriously suggest that 636 or 625 runs are good cricket value for a five-day match?

Of course not—and the M.C.C. must face the fact and reorganize things so that the next Test series in this country gets a lot closer to being a live entertainment.

THIS WEEK'S COVER

KENNETH PETTS has strong views on bedtime for youngsters and was always reluctant to tire his children, John and Jean—now aged seventeen and fourteen—with long, late night journeys. "But there were always exceptions," he says. Petts lives in Bedford, and his picture is of two friends and their children whom he met returning home from the station there. "The lad should not look so tidy after a day out," he adds. "I never did."



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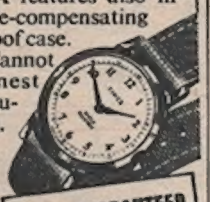

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FREE SPEECH

Changing face of the ideal home

After nearly a year of viewing countless houses for sale, we despaired of finding just what we wanted. So we decided to have our own house built.

My wife and I put our idea of a dream house on paper, and proudly showed it to our friends. We seem to have started the biggest argument for months. "I wouldn't dream of having a little kitchenette like that," said one friend. "I like plenty of room in my kitchen." Another thought that our large hall wasted space. "You don't sit in the hall. Make your lounge bigger instead," he argued. Our architect reassured us. "Few people really agree about rooms," he said, "because ideas vary according to locality. I would never design the same house for the north as I would for the south. Scottish housing tastes, for example, differ from those in Wales. People often go right through life preferring the type of house found in the part of Britain in which they were born." We are wondering just what determines the ideal home in different parts of the country.—D. C., Bedfordshire.

Well Dressed

DURING a coach tour of Derbyshire recently, we visited two villages which were gay with flags and crowded with visitors. The ancient village wells were decorated with

One of Wirksworth's decorated wells

flowers and represented cathedrals and Biblical subjects. I was told that nearly everyone in the village takes a hand in collecting flowers for this strange custom of well-dressing. — Austin Yelland, Sheffield, Yorkshire.

Tissington and Wirksworth are among the villages which still dress their wells—a custom which may go back to pagan times. Today the ceremony is religious, and the wells are decorated for Ascension Day with designs made by pressing flowers into a background of clay.

Driving Rule

WHEN I drove across Europe from Malta to attend the Festival of Britain, my international driving licence allowed me to drive in England for six months. This year, I returned to England for good—and was told that the international driving licence is invalid if I am staying in this country. I would have been stuck in the docks until I had passed the driving test, if I had not held a British driving licence. Yet my capability as a driver has not altered one bit.—G. H., London.

"An international driving licence is valid for one year," explains the Ministry of Transport. "After that, the holder must comply with British law—he must either pass a test, or drive with a provisional licence and 'L' plates."

Plain Food

I WAS delighted to find little piquancies such as French capers and red currant jelly on sale again, as I feel they make uninteresting meals more appetizing. But my three daughters, who grew up during the war, have never known these delicacies, and push them aside. They prefer mixed butter and margarine to pure butter, and hardly know the taste of real cream. What an awful portent for the meals to be prepared by their generation.—Mrs. Mary Herle, Stoneleigh, Surrey.

One song made him famous

The success story of

JIMMY YOUNG

IN JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK

Test The Cyclists

AS a retired magistrate, I found John Bull's Editorial on cyclists plain common sense. But not only the youngsters cause accidents. Time after time, I have questioned cyclists in court, and they often reveal a shocking ignorance of the Highway Code. A driving test for cyclists is needed, with an annual licence at a small fee. Why should anyone be allowed to ride a lethal machine without a test—even though the machine has only pedals and two wheels? — G. W., Kent.

Family Reunion

AFTER a funeral service, all the guests collected in the lounge of the family's house. There was quite a buzz of conversation as refreshments were served, and old friends met again after many years. Yet when I had visited this house before, there was little conversation or happiness, and I realized the joy that could have come from such a reunion if those from far away could have visited a *living* relative. I resolved there and then that before my own family and friends had to gather together for such a sad occasion, I would invite them while I could share the pleasure. — Mrs. E. G., Cleveleys, Lancashire.

Dark Secret

I CANNOT agree with the poultry expert who says that dark egg yolks have no greater feeding value than pale ones. Dark yolks contain carotin, an essential ingredient for healthy chicks. Pale yolks are deficient in it, and this year I lost twenty per cent of my chicks, through lack of carotin. The remainder had to be dosed with cod-liver oil.—Farmer's Wife, Woodbridge, Suffolk.

"If poultry don't get enough green-stuff to eat, their eggs may lack carotin," agrees a doctor. "Carotin is found in green leaves, carrots, and milk, among other substances. It is a form of vitamin A."

Missing Bonnet

A READER predicted that cars of the future would have no bonnet or radiator ("Free Speech," July 11). I have been driving my present car for eight months. As the photograph

shows, there is no bonnet or radiator. It is about sixteen feet long and there is room for eight passengers.—D. H. Morgan, Farnham, Surrey.

Mr. Morgan built the car himself. It has a diesel engine, mounted under a table in the centre of the body, with the passengers seated round it. He designed it largely for towing other vehicles. "But," he adds, "I've got another model on the drawing board, with a smaller engine."

Curious Cows

COWS are not used to strangers, and, as they are inquisitive, any strange movement near their pasture will attract their attention. This explains your reader's experience of cows "listening" to her harmonica. As a countryman, I would add a word of advice. Never take a dog into a field where cows are grazing—it's dangerous to the cattle, your dog, and yourself. —A. A. Cousins, Cattisham, Suffolk.

Water Jets

SITTING on the beach, I noticed a small cloud passing overhead. It wasn't big enough to make even the most timid person seek shelter. Then, three jet planes flew straight through it, and immediately hundreds of

people were drenched. Does the immense speed of the jet, and the heat from its exhaust stream, affect the water droplets in the cloud? — W. Taylor, Christchurch, Hampshire.

"A very technical matter," says a meteorologist. "Aircraft flying through some types of cloud may have an effect, but in this particular case it is unlikely that the jets caused the droplets to become big enough to fall. To reach the ground so soon, the rain must have left the cloud before the jets entered it."

Report On Zinnias

IN April, I proudly proclaimed in "Free Speech" that I had saved 350 zinnia seeds from my own plants—compared with six seeds for sixpence in a packet. In fairness to seed merchants and the readers who warned me that my own seeds would not come up, I think I should tell you how many appeared. The answer is—one.—S. G. Barnes, London.

Letters intended for publication should be as brief as possible and include the sender's full name and address. John Bull pays a guinea for every letter printed. Readers with personal problems should send inquiries (other than medical) to John Bull Free Advice Service with a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

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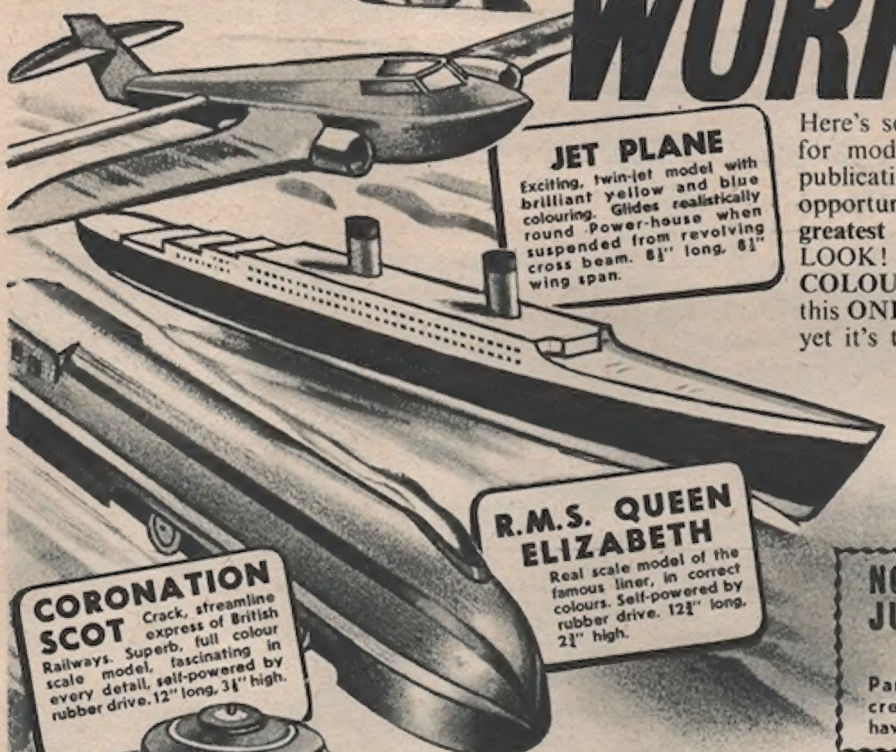

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ABOVE US THE WAVES (2) *The thrilling exploits of Britain's human torpedoes and midget submarines, by CHARLES WARREN and JAMES BENSON*

Lief Larsen goes fishing for the Tirpitz

His boat was just a simple fishing smack. But underneath she carried the one weapon that might destroy Germany's sea power

IT WAS ROUGH in the North Atlantic on the morning of October 26, 1942, as the Arthur pulled away from the Shetlands. There was nothing remarkable about the boat. She looked what she was: a small, sturdy fishing smack whose kind can be met in scores between the Lofotens and Cape Wrath. But she was on a remarkable voyage. Her objective was not fish—but the 40,000-ton German battleship Tirpitz, sheltering on the Norwegian coast 450 miles from the Shetlands.

The Tirpitz lay in a womb of anti-submarine nets in Asenfjord, a small inlet in the great Trondheimfjord, and the Arthur was carrying the only weapons that could attack her at that period of the war—British two-man human torpedoes or "chariots," as the navy called them. The attack, the first operation of its kind to be carried out by the Allies, was the result of seven months' heroic training in and under the Scottish lochs. The torpedoes, each with its crew of two, were to be launched from the Arthur at the entrance

As they neared the German boat, Larsen saw the boy. He was staring amazed at the torpedo under the hull. Kalve, a rope in his hand, acted swiftly

ILLUSTRATION BY EDWARD OSMOND

Lief "Shetlands" Larsen, D.S.O., D.S.C., C.G.M., D.S.M., the Norwegian hero and skipper of the Arthur. A rather shy, humorous sailor, he escaped to Britain when the Germans occupied his country and joined a special service unit. Operating from the Shetland Islands, he ran supplies in fishing boats to the Norwegian underground movement and landed and took off agents. For his part in the attempted attack on the Tirpitz with the human torpedo crews he won a C.G.M.

of Asenfjord. The four charioteers were then to ride them through the nets to the hull of the battleship.

The charioteers were British naval and military personnel under the command of Lieutenant William "Jock" Brewster. Besides Brewster, there were a sergeant of the Royal Engineers, Don Craig, and Able Seamen Brown, Evans, Causer and Tebb. The crew of the smack were Norwegians, under the command of Lief Larsen, of the Royal Norwegian Navy's Special Service Unit.

To the crew of four Norwegians—Larsen (the captain), Björnöy, Kalve and Strand—the pitch and roll of the little smack was normal. The six charioteers found it otherwise and Bill Tebb, the first to be overcome, soon retired below.

Tussle In The Icy Spray

Sub-Lieutenant William Brewster would have liked to follow him, but seasickness was not his only problem. The motion of the ship was making the two torpedoes, concealed on the upper deck under layers of tarpaulins and fishing nets, strain dangerously against their lashings. Brewster called Larsen, and the two men, huddled in the icy spray, spent an hour dragging the cables tauter. The exertion allayed Brewster's anxiety and cured his seasickness. The explosive warheads worried him less: they were hidden snugly away under the load of peat in the hold.

The first night fell on the Arthur making good headway through a subsiding sea. The next day and night passed uneventfully. Most of the charioteers were feeling better, and thoughts of the Tirpitz crept back through the misery of nausea. Larsen was in his element; this was the adventure he had dreamt of for two years. His tremendous energy and his good-humoured quipping of the seasick in forthright but eccentric English did much to restore a rather queasy morale. But the sea was still lively and the first landfall, made at noon on Wednesday, October 28, came as an undisguised relief to the British divers.

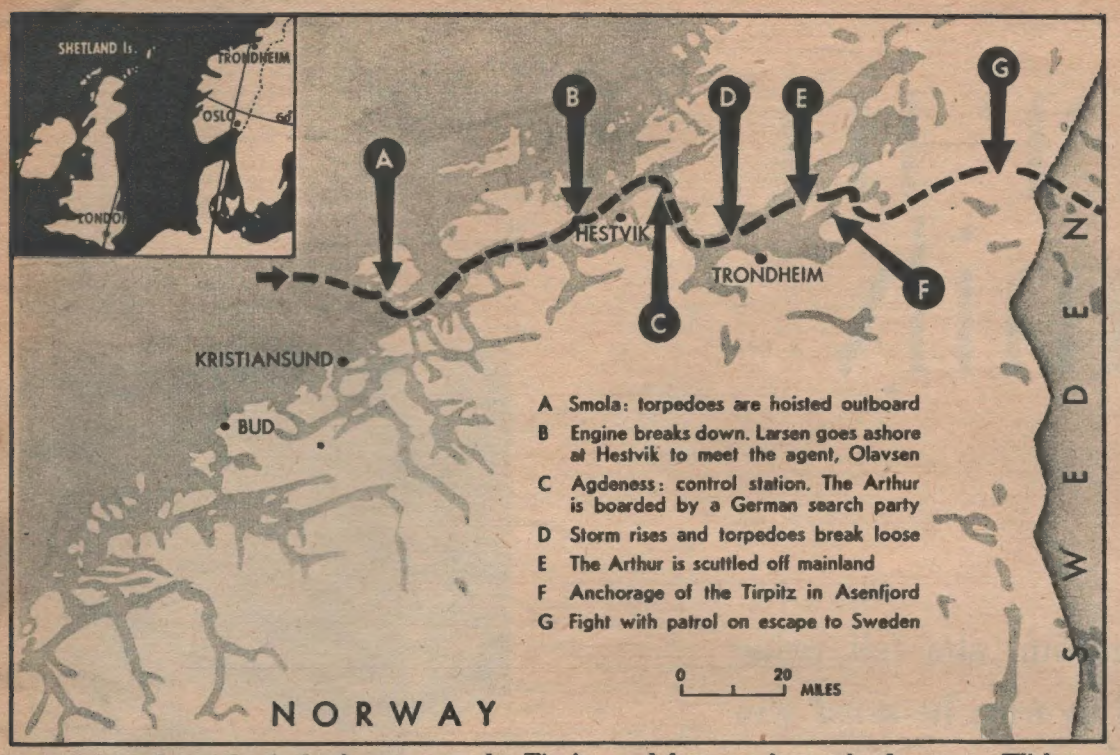
Their first sight of Norway was a snow-crowned mountain which Larsen identified as a peak standing above Bud, a small town on a low headland twenty-five miles south-west of Kristiansund. Bud is in latitude sixty-two degrees north; the little group assembled on the deck of the Arthur, blinked in the bitter cold. Looking at the steely water, the charioteers realized that they might live to be grateful for the unpleasant experiences in ice-filled tanks which the "guinea pigs" of the Admiralty Experimental Unit had suffered on their behalf.

Ominous Clatter Below

Larsen took his bearing and the Arthur had just picked up speed when there was an ominous clatter from below. Björnöy, the engineer, poked a wry face out of the hatch. He spoke rapidly to Larsen, and Larsen swore. The engine had broken down. The coast was only twelve miles away, and the smack now lay in full sight of land. That was disquieting enough, but the early northern darkness was imminent and Larsen needed another bearing to be sure of his position. There was nothing to do but hope they would be unobserved. Brewster took the charioteers below while Larsen and Björnöy worked on the engine. The suspense lasted three hours; it was almost full night when the engines started once more.

Larsen edged the smack closer to the coast, somewhat reassured by the shore lights which were winking on in surprising numbers. To the Norwegians, who knew this coast intimately, the lights were as good as a bearing; Larsen was soon confident enough to set a northerly course. He was heading for the island of Smola, forty miles ahead, which lay at the entrance of the narrow channel leading to the jaw of Trondheimfjord.

The night was moonless and the sea now



Dotted line shows the Arthur's route to the Tirpitz, and her crew's overland escape. With two torpedoes secured under her hull, she passed the German controls as a cargo boat carrying peat

Lieutenant Brewster, twenty-five, commanded the charioteers on the raid and won a D.S.C.

quite calm. The Arthur went forward briskly, and Kristiansund was passed in the early hours of the morning. Smola was now less than three hours ahead, and there was certain work to be done. Until this point the Arthur had pretended to be a fishing smack going about her lawful business. Now she had to assume another disguise: that of a cargo vessel carrying peat from the port of Edöy, on the island of Smola, to Trondheim. It was for this fiction that Larsen carried false papers and a false manifest.

The dangerous stage of the first part of the adventure was approaching. Brewster called his men on deck; the next two hours were spent in stowing below nearly all the nets which had covered the torpedoes. These now lay under a layer of tarpaulins on which a few nets were thrown to produce a suitable appearance of negligence.

Spotted By German Plane

At first light Smola could be seen ahead. They passed Edöy, a clean-looking little town of white houses and stone piers, and half an hour later Larsen prepared to anchor in the appointed mooring. This was a quiet channel between two islands in the Hög group, five miles south-east of Smola. Visibility was good; Larsen scanned both shores with his glasses. There was nothing to arouse his suspicions; the tiny archipelago seemed to be deserted at that hour. The keen air and the peaceful anchorage, the lucid outline of the white hills, the thought, above all, that the Tirpitz lay only another seventy miles ahead, made the morning stimulating.

They had hardly finished breakfast when Strand, who was on watch above, shouted a warning. At the same time a familiar rumbling was heard and a twin-engined German aircraft appeared, flying low about a mile away to the east. No one, fortunately, was yet uncovering the chariots; those on deck busied themselves with odd jobs as naturally as they could.

For half an hour the aircraft flew aimlessly to and fro without coming very near the smack. At last, just as it appeared to be leaving the scene, it turned sharply and started a low run straight at the Arthur. A few seconds later the whole adventure nearly ended in disaster. As the aircraft roared towards the ship, so low that those on deck could clearly see the cannons in the wings, one of the charioteers, letting his fighting instinct get the better of him, dashed from below and made for the concealed mounting of the Arthur's gun.

"What to hell you bloody fool!" Larsen's yell boomed above the engine's beating. It froze the wretched diver in the hatchway, his lust for battle turned to sheepishness. There was a heavy silence till the aircraft disappeared. Then Larsen served out his "bottle" to the culprit. It was so artistic that Brewster felt he need not add another word of reprimand.

The Arthur was now in the Trondheimsleden, the three-mile wide channel which led to the mouth of Trondheimfjord, forty miles away to the north-east. The entrance to the fjord was pinched by the small promontory of Agdeness, and at the port there the Germans had established a control station. Once past that, the way lay south for twenty miles before the fjord widened and swept north-east once more. Trondheim itself was on the south bank, in the elbow joint of the turn. Fifteen miles above Trondheim was the little bay of Asen, hardly more than a cavity in the coast's rocky teeth. In that cavity the Tirpitz was anchored.

The German control system almost certainly meant interrogation and search. Larsen was confident that his false papers and manifest would pass the test; he had no means of preventing search. It was essential, then, to get the torpedoes outboard and concealed in their steel hoop under the smack's hull.

As soon as it was certain the aircraft was not to return, Brewster and Evans were helped into their diving suits, and the small rowing boat was put over the side. The securing was going to be dangerous, for the day was as clear as the water; but if the Arthur was to be within attacking distance of the German battleship that night the chariots had to be in position as soon as possible.

Torpedoes Out Of Hiding

While Larsen and Strand mounted guard, Craig, Brown and the remaining Norwegians pulled the tarpaulins from the chariots and lifted the warheads from their hiding place under the peat. The davit swung one and then the other chariot into the sea; Brewster, waiting in the boat, was alongside them in a moment. As soon as he put out his hand to steady them he realized that the job was not going to be so easy after all. There was a slight chop on the surface and the ship's hull heaved gently. Then came a serious complication.

"She's moving!" Evans was looking at the smack in surprise. Brewster, bent over the chariots, glanced up. There was no doubt of it: the Arthur was dragging the anchor. Securing the torpedoes beneath a drifting hull was out of the question; Brewster called Larsen to the side. A glance showed him what was happening; the boat and the chariots were already slightly astern.

"Get under way and tow us to the shore," Brewster called. While Björnöy ducked below to start the engines, Kalve and Strand threw ropes to the divers; in five minutes, with the two chariots rolling like captive sharks astern, the smack was steaming to the channel's southern bank. Larsen picked out a cove, a small apron of boulders under a barrel-like cliff, and brought the ship into the shallows. Even here the anchor failed to hold in the rocky bottom; eventually, with much exertion and cursing, it was secured in a cleft of rock ashore.

Work began on the torpedoes at once. Brewster found it no less difficult than in the open channel; the rising wind sent the waves racing in and the Arthur was bucking fitfully on the chain. Darkness fell with the chariots still unsecured, and Brewster decided to quit.

Uneasy Night Of Waiting

Guard duties were organized, for the knowledge that the smack was so near the shore made Larsen anxious. Lights showed in clusters from across the sound; sometimes a siren called and was answered from the darkness; the Trondheim channel, quite suddenly, had become acutely hostile. Brewster thought of enemy patrols; of flares dipping from the cliff, of launches closing in from the sea behind probing beams of light. The sentries on deck watched the torpedoes lying by the ship's side. They looked horribly obvious, they thought, in spite of the covering night.

At 4.30 a.m. Tebb woke Brewster and Evans and helped them into their suits. The sea had gone down and the smack held steady on the anchor. With a "now or never" resolution, the two divers went over the side once more. This time there was no difficulty; in two hours the steel hawsers were in place, clamping the chariots snugly under the hull. As Brewster surfaced for the last time and gave the thumbs up sign, the men on deck nearly gave a cheer.

Larsen immediately prepared to weigh and proceed; his plan was to pass into Trondheimfjord and be in a position to attack the Tirpitz that night. In this he was to be disappointed. Brewster and Evans were scarcely inboard when an exclamation from Tebb brought them all to the alert. "Gawd! Look at that!"

First light was rapidly widening over the

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A boxer in the family

by *FRANK BENOIT*

ILLUSTRATED BY PHILIP TOWNSEND

It was his last fight. Watching him, she felt pride tearing at her heart. He wanted to win; he *must* win

A young man was sitting in the tree. Helen was too surprised to speak. She just stared at him

SHE CAME OUT of the cottage and stepped into the roadster at the door. "Will you be back for dinner?" The voice came through the open window.

"Expect me when you see me," Helen Merton called back somewhat irritably.

There was a mutter from the window. "Like a bear with a sore head. . . ."

The car swung round, the back wheels spinning on the gravel. As it raced for the highway the voice from the house continued: "There she goes, driving like mad. I don't know what's come over the girl lately. She wants a husband to settle her down."

The girl in the car could no longer hear the voice, but she had a good enough idea what the woman in the house would be saying. Her foot went down on the accelerator.

It was some minutes before the mounting speed began to loosen the tension within her. She concentrated solely on the car. She was a good driver and she knew it. Soon she gradually eased the speed down to normal. As she did so, she began to think of herself and her troubles.

Really I have no troubles, she thought. I'm twenty-eight. I'm supposed to be very good looking. I've never had any trouble finding young men, except that I can't find the one I want. And Nanny knows it! The present boy friend, Gerry—oh, what an old woman he was! And oh, how she hated old women! All old women, Nanny included. With the last thought her foot pressed down on the accelerator again.

Suddenly a cat streaked from the side of the road. She jammed on the brakes and madly jockeyed the wheel. The car swerved off the road into a field, and stopped just short of piling into the biggest oak tree she had ever seen.

"And that," she said aloud, "was too damn' close for comfort." She got out.

"For all three of us," a man sitting up in the oak tree said. "For you, me and Tubby—the idiot."

She was too surprised to say anything. She just stared at him. He climbed down from the tree and walked to the side of the car.

"Of course I don't always play Tarzan at this time of day." He grinned. "I was up there trying to get old Jimmy's cat. Tubby had other ideas. He came down the opposite side, started across the road, and here you are."

"I'm sorry about the cat," she said.

"Don't worry. He's probably up another tree

Helen rose to her feet with the rest, yelling

right now. Jimmy would never have forgiven you, though."

"Jimmy?"

"I'm sorry." He kept grinning at her. "Jimmy Perry. He's my manager."

"Are you an actor?" she asked him. He was handsome enough.

The grin grew even wider. "In a way. I fight for a living. Reegan is my name—Dave Reegan."

HELEN looked at him with added interest. So this was the famous Dave "Count" Reegan. She knew they were almost neighbours. His camp was not far away from the cottage. He doesn't look at all like a boxer, she thought. Not a mark on his face, and I'm sure his tan is real.

He's probably, she thought objectively, the best looking man I've ever seen.

"Well, do you think I'll pass?" he asked. "The inspection, I mean."

"I'm sorry." She blinked. "I just find it amazing that you look more like a polo player than a boxer."

"Yes, isn't it?" Reegan said, and his voice had just a slight hint of sarcasm.

"I really didn't mean that," she said. "My name is Helen Merton and you're the first man I've ever apologized to twice within a minute. I live just up the road. Can I help you collect your cat and perhaps give you a lift back?"

"Thanks very much," he said. "I'll take you up on the lift. My manager will be hopping around like a mother hen. I'm supposed to be in training and he hates to let me out of his sight. Even when I go for a walk he worries. Wait, I'll

hoarsely. This was not the Count Reegan she had known. This was a new, savage killer of a man. He was fighting for something he wanted to keep

get Tubby, the mad feline, from that tree across the road."

She helped him.

They arrived at the camp and Jimmy Perry was waiting to meet them.

"You're late," he said at once to the boxer. "Six weeks to go to the fight and you're late. Why?"

"This is Miss Helen Merton," Dave said. "I've told her about you, also I found your cat wandering around the countryside again."

Jimmy looked at her. He was a short, squat, completely bald, powerful little man. His scrutiny was swift and complete. As his darting eyes took her in, she felt that he knew everything there was to know about her. Funnily enough, she immediately had the impression that he liked her.

"Hallo, Miss Merton. If you've been keeping the Count overtime I don't like it—hang around for a while and look the camp over—Come here, you stupid cat—And you, Champ, you've got a few rounds to go with the boys." The words tumbled out one after the other with machine gun precision. "Come on, come on, let's get moving. You can stay for a meal, Miss Merton. Steaks here. Maybe you play pontoon, too?"

The boxer smiled at her. "He always talks like that. He sees too many films. But please do stay."

"I will," Helen Merton said.

Jimmy shooed her home at ten o'clock. "The Count needs his beauty sleep," he said. "Come back soon. We like you."

"My guardian angel is right on that score," Reegan told her. "We like you very much. Come back tomorrow, if you have nothing else to do."

"I'd love to," she said. "Watch Tubby when I arrive."

Driving home, she realized that the tension had completely left her. When she thought of Gerry, she almost laughed. He seemed a long time ago, an age ago. He was a weak, aimless character. And at once, being a woman, she began making comparisons. Dave Reegan was all the things Gerry was not. Strong, purposeful, unbeaten by life. Unbeaten by anyone. . . . She was filled suddenly with a dangerous elation.

Watching the Count in the outside ring that afternoon had been an experience for her. Even to her eyes, unaccustomed to boxing, he was a craftsman. The rapier-like perfection of his left hand, the amazing footwork—he was all style.

"And it's not only style," Jimmy had told her. "It's heart. You know he's thirty-three and he's been champ for pretty near thirteen years. You see the way he bobs and weaves, you see the way he uses his left—you know how I taught him that? I used to tie his right arm behind his back and put him to work for an hour at a time. He was just a young kid but he certainly learned fast. He was unstoppable."

As she turned up the drive the headlights picked the figure of Nanny waiting outside the cottage. "Where have you been?" Nanny said as she stopped the car. "I thought you'd had an accident for sure."

"I've been down the road at Count Reegan's place," she said. "The boxer."

At the mention of the name Nanny grinned. "Well, now," she said, "a boxer. There's never been a boxer in the family before. All sorts, but no boxer."

"Good night," Helen said, firmly.

Visiting Count Reegan became a habit—a habit she neither could nor wanted to break. She would arrive at the camp early in the morning and she and Jimmy would start off in the car driving slowly beside the running fighter. "He hates roadwork," Jimmy told her. "He's been having a lot of trouble with his weight lately. His legs aren't what they used to be."

"The way you talk about his legs you'd think he was an old man!" she laughed.

"He is as far as this racket is concerned," Jimmy said. "You can't go on for ever."

She looked at the burly figure running beside the car. An old man? Incredible that in any "racket" he could be considered declining. Incredible that he could be anything but perfect.

That evening, instead of playing pontoon, they went for a walk along the path behind the camp to the lake. The sunset was a maze of crimson. The lake was a mirror of the deeper shadow from the shore. They stood there awhile not saying anything, and then, so gently that she was hardly aware of it, his arm slipped round her waist.

"I don't want to get involved before a fight," he said softly.

"Don't you?" she said.

Silence again.

"But I am," he said suddenly. "I'm already involved." And he kissed her.

There was a quick grace in the gesture. All his movements were quick and definite. For a

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Playing the clarinet, Ivy Benson leads her band through a complicated number. She also plays the piano, saxophone and piano-accordion

A glamour outfit is inspected by Ivy Benson. Though bodices, which wear out first, are detachable, dresses cost her £1,200 a year

Ivy Benson's feminine touch shakes up a man's world

by JOHN HARMAN

Her all-girl band had to fight its way into the tough dance music world. Now she's top-of-the-bill, and her greatest enemy is Cupid

WHEN IVY BENSON, Britain's best-known woman bandleader, arrived in Berlin on tour last February, her hand was bitten badly by a dog suspected of rabies. Doctors rushed her to hospital. She had nine injections which knocked her practically unconscious and, despite her protests that she had a performance that night, was ordered to stay in bed under observation.

Auriel Carnell, her pianist, recalls: "As soon as the nurse was out of the room, Ivy got up, dressed and took a taxi to the dance hall. Police chased her in a jeep, but she was already on the stage when they arrived. After the two-hour show, she was taken back to hospital, insisting that she had never felt better. But her temperature was one hundred and three."

Ivy Benson, nicknamed "half-pint" because she is only five feet tall, is respected in show business for her energy, determination and pluck. Sharp-featured and purposeful, she has fought hard to make her sixteen-girl band a top-of-the-bill attraction. She reckons that the toughest obstacle in her career has been the prejudice against women musicians. Harry Frances, assistant secretary of the 29,000-strong Musicians' Union, says: "She is one of the comparatively few women in what is still, very largely, a man's world. Until she gained recognition, men musicians distrusted her because they feared her girls would work for cut-price salaries. Theatre and dance hall owners, on the other hand, thought her a bad risk. Prejudice wasn't shown openly. Ivy simply didn't get bookings."

Men Tried To Stop Her

Her first big radio engagement touched off a bitter controversy in the dance band profession. Opinions on the merits of women's bands were strongly divided, and when she was booked to broadcast regularly for two months male dance band directors protested to the B.B.C. that no contract should last more than four consecutive weeks. Maurice Winnick, sharing the viewpoint of other delegates who met B.B.C. representatives, says: "Our objection was that she had reduced opportunities for bandleaders. There was nothing personal against Ivy. It was a matter of principle."

Ivy admits that she exploits her femininity when she can. After taking a £200 booking to play at a dance in the West Country, she told the agent for the ballroom: "I can't afford the usual ten per cent commission. I'll pay five." Her terms were accepted without question. Comments the agent: "No man would have got away with it."

Her shrewdness in business deals is allied to an obstinacy which makes colleagues despair. Shortly after the war, while touring a well-known circuit of music halls at a large salary, she decided that it would be a new experience to do a TV broadcast. The music hall managers pointed out that her contract prohibited TV appearances, and that she could be banned from the circuit. Ivy replied that her mind was made up. She did the broadcast—for a £60 fee—and has not played on that circuit since.

Her minimum fee for a one-night performance is £170. On weekly tours, she has a fixed percentage of the theatre's takings, which averages £1,100. "Such overheads as fares, advertising, insurance and salaries are high," she says. "For the cabaret, I have a singer-dancer and a singer impressionist, while in the orchestra there are five trumpets and trombones, five saxophones, piano, double bass, guitar and drums. I pay my girls a starting salary of £13 a week. Some get £20. My own dresses cost up to one hundred guineas each, and clothes for the band amount to £1,200 a year."

Trouble Over Hula-Hula

Every girl in the band has a new outfit in the spring, summer and winter. The bodices of their dresses wear out first, because of the rubbing of the instruments. They are made detachable. Such attention to detail has made the band among the best-dressed in Britain.

Malta, however, objected to its hula-hula outfits. A squad of policemen cleared the dance hall and ordered the girls back into the dressing-room. They said that bare midriffs were against the law, and refused to unlock the dressing-room until petticoats were worn beneath the costumes. Ivy says: "I showed the policemen a statue of a mermaid which was decorating the stage without any accusations of indecency, and tied a scarf round its diaphragm."

The problem of keeping the band up to strength is continuous. Ivy has been heard to remark that her worst enemy is Cupid. "The girls' ages range from sixteen to twenty-four, and every year at least three leave to get married," she says. "One year I lost nine. A woman doesn't attach the same value to a job as a man. When *the* man comes on the horizon, her trumpet or saxophone goes into its box, and she's off by the next train."

Sudden marriages can be embarrassing for the bandleader. "In Bristol," Ivy recalls, "just before a broadcast, a trumpeter telephoned to say that she was starting her honeymoon. I had to relax my insistence on an all-woman band and hire a local musician—a man. It was a broadcast in the Overseas Service, at three o'clock in the morning. The girls and I were

In a Torquay ballroom, Ivy Benson autographs copies of her songs for her fans. "I owe the troops a debt," she says. "They made me famous"

Ivy Benson listens critically while Lilian Smith, her latest trainee, practises with pianist Auriel Carnell. Girl players are hard to find

ready for bed. Our hair was in curlers and we had nightclothes under our overcoats. The man felt so uncomfortable that he blushed crimson and stared at the ceiling the whole time."

Replacements are always hard to find. According to Maurice Kinn, who was her agent for nearly two years: "If a bandleader wants a male musician, the place to go is Archer Street, the London alley where out-of-work musicians wait for jobs. But there is no equivalent of Archer Street for women. First-class women players are extremely scarce. Few pretty girls stay home at nights studying the double bass."

Ivy interviews winners of brass band and music school competitions as a matter of routine. When a fifteen-year-old trumpeter seemed promising, she paid her £2 a week to stay "reserved" in case she turned professional. Occasionally, girls take advantage of the shortage of talent. Once Ivy offered to train a cinema usherette in trombone playing. The girl signed on, but a fortnight later said that she would leave unless her mother was booked too. This was agreed upon, but then the pair said that they would both go unless the girl's husband was engaged to help behind the scenes. "In the end," says Ivy, "I was paying three salaries to teach one girl."

Must Be Ready To Travel

Newcomers quickly learn why she warns them to expect hardships. Recently, the band left a London ballroom at 1 a.m., arrived in Exeter seven hours later, still wearing theatrical make-up, and gave a show in the evening. Linda Lane, the band's singer and dancer, says: "Signing on with Ivy means lifting one's roots entirely. We travel about nine thousand miles every year, often giving two performances daily."

Troop tours are their speciality. They have done fifteen tours in Germany so far, which is a record, and hold similar records for Austria and the Middle East. Other foreign parts the band has visited include France, Belgium, Holland, Egypt, Italy and the Azores.

"British troops are the most shy of all," says Linda, "and Ivy's method of getting them to talk is to find which men and girls have home towns in common. On the other hand, in Germany, G.I.s dragged us off the stage during one number and made us dance with them."

At least one Russian soldier liked the band's high-powered precision playing. On the way to Berlin, the Russian checkpoint authorities at Helmstedt kept the Ivy Benson motor coach waiting for two hours. Growing impatient, the girls got out their instruments and held an impromptu jam session. When they began to play "Black Eyes," a Russian officer nearby began talking with Ivy, who speaks Russian in addition to German, French and Spanish, and said that the band could be a hit in Moscow.

Coach Hustled Through

She recalls that evidently his superiors disapproved of fraternizing. On the return journey, the girls had their instruments ready as they neared Helmstedt. But there was a different officer on duty. The coach was hustled through the checkpoint, and, to drown any attempts at jam sessions, a Wagnerian overture was blared through loudspeakers.

Ivy is a regular visitor to Bow Street magistrates' court. Before an overseas trip, she has to deposit with the magistrates a £100 surety for the well-being of each girl under eighteen in her care. At every town visited abroad, under-eighteens must call on the British Consul to be asked whether they are satisfied with their treatment during the tour.

Some of the younger ones are impressionable, and their love affairs need careful handling. "In Vienna," Ivy recalls, "a sixteen-year-old saxophone player told me that she had fallen in love with a sergeant, but that, since he was married, she was determined to throw herself in the Danube. I sent her to bed. A few hours later I let the rest of the girls take her to a dance. She returned radiant, head over heels in love with a lieutenant."

Ivy, who plays the saxophone, piano, piano-accordion and clarinet, began to learn the piano when three years old. She was born in a public house in Leeds in November, 1913, the daughter of Roland Benson, a variety theatre conductor and trombonist. "At the age of six," says her father, "she was so intent on her piano lessons that I had to take her to the doctor. She was sleepwalking. At nine, she made her first broadcast: a solo performance of 'In A Persian Market' in *Children's Hour.*"

Later, she won a scholarship to a school of commercial art, but thought that she was wasting her time there and became a shorthand-typist in a clothing factory for 18s. a week. Of that, she spent 8s. 6d. on the hire purchase of a saxophone. She worked in the factory from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and played in a restaurant band from 8 p.m. to 2.30 a.m. Then she decided to try her luck in London.

She got a job in the orchestra of a night club off Charing Cross Road, but, indignant over the low status of women musicians, she resolved to let the men who ran show business see how good an all-woman band could be. One agent told her flatly: "Women musicians are all right in tea-shops, but they'll never stand an earthly in the big-band field." Nevertheless, she formed a six-piece all-girl orchestra and toured a leading dance hall circuit in 1940. Three years later, with thirty girls, she was voted "Band of the Year" in succession to Henry Hall.

Dressing-room Is A Club

She married Caryll Clark, son of the late comedian, Billy Caryll, at Caxton Hall in 1949, but the marriage was dissolved in 1951 on her petition. Since then, she has created for herself a wide social circle. Her dressing-room is a club for film producers, actors, musicians, composers, song publishers and anyone else in the profession who cares to call.

She accepts no payment for troop tours other than her girls' salaries and fares. "After all, my broadcasts to Servicemen made me famous. I owe the troops a debt," she says. Impulsively generous, she bestows favours regardless of the inconvenience caused to others. Taking a car-load of friends through the outskirts of London a few weeks ago, she stopped and offered a soldier a lift. He wanted to get to Victoria Station, and she insisted on taking him the whole way there. The detour made her other passengers three hours late. THE END

JOHN BULL PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM KEMP

THE BLACK PARACHUTE

by KEM BENNETT

ILLUSTRATED BY FRED LAURENT

She went cold with horror. This man, drugged and helpless, was being sent to his death—and all she could do was watch

DRIVING FAST because excitement compelled her, with the headlights of the car reaching out to cut surgically into the darkness like shining knives, Anne-Marie reached the airfield just before ten o'clock. It was remote, derelict—a great pretzel-shaped piece of war's scar-tissue set in a rolling English landscape. She identified the dilapidated Nissen hut in which Peter Macready had said he would be waiting by the light creeping past the edges of its blacked-out windows.

The hut door swung open under her hand. Inside, two men were waiting. The first to see her was Peter. He flung his arms wide and shouted a greeting in gutter-French, "*Ah, Patapouf! Ca va, ça gaz, ça boum?* How are you, my little half-breed?"

Anne-Marie smiled and answered him affectionately, shaking his hand in the conventional French way; then turned to look with interest at the second man.

He was a stranger. He had risen from an ammunition box set beside an improvised table in the middle of the hut, and she was now able to confirm a first impression that he was almost grotesquely tall. They smiled at one another with the hesitant politeness of strangers waiting to meet, the girl tall and slender, the man physically immense, with a strongly featured face dominated by eyes which were large and dark and showed a compulsive directness of expression.

"Anne-Marie," Peter was saying, making an act of introduction, "meet Herr Schmidt—the man who pays the money and gets the soft answers." She put out her hand, walking towards the big man while Peter continued to talk. "Schmidt, *mon vieux*, this kind and beautiful lady is Anne-Marie Parker, G.C., M.B.E., etcetera. If you want a testimony to her unprecedented skill and courage, you might apply to ex-*Sturmbannfuehrer* Kieffer of the Gestapo headquarters in Paris—if you can find the lout."

Schmidt clicked his heels and bowed, taking

Anne-Marie struggled up, screaming, "*Attention! Attention!* Don't jump!" But he didn't hear her. Staring ahead, he moved closer to the opening

the girl's outstretched hand. "How do you do, Mrs. Parker? I am honoured to meet so famous and courageous an ex-adversary." As he spoke, Anne-Marie glanced with reproof at Peter, embarrassed by the flamboyant introduction, but then she smiled at the German and said, "Thank you, Herr Schmidt."

Peter, having glanced at his watch, was pulling ammunition boxes closer to the table. "Half an hour to go at least," he said. "The kit's all ready in the car outside, and Charley Bates is standing by to switch on the lights. If you two want to make plans, carry on."

Schmidt nodded, reaching for a brief-case from which he took a map of France. "How much has Mr. Macready told you about me, Mrs Parker?"

"Very little," Anne-Marie answered, "except that you came to England illegally and have to get out the same way."

The German raised one of his colourless eyebrows. "In that case you are taking a great deal on trust, are you not?"

The girl nodded calmly. "Peter and I together survived two years of the most dangerous existence there is. He saved my life twice and I saved his once, at least. We trust one another, Herr Schmidt. I was sure Peter wasn't proposing anything shameful when he asked me to help you."

"I see." Schmidt nodded. After a second's pause he asked, "Would it be an impertinence to ask what are your motives?"

Anne-Marie laughed. "I've been short of excitement for a long time," she explained. "I have no objection to earning five hundred pounds, and I couldn't refuse to do Peter a favour."

The policeman came closer. She struggled to get out the words of her message

SMILING now, Schmidt nodded again. "Those are good reasons," he commented. Then, unfolding his map, he added, "Perhaps I should first tell you that I am not a criminal—so that you shall have it quite clear." Anne-Marie inclined her head. "In fact," Schmidt continued, "I am a German ex-officer of high rank, with political aspirations. I am both anti-Communist and anti-Fascist. A full knowledge of my activities might be dangerous for you, Mrs. Parker, so I shall explain briefly that I came to England to obtain information of the whereabouts of some treasure found in 1945 by an officer of your Royal Air Force and hidden in Northern Italy. Among the boxes, which our friend in the R.A.F. thought to contain only loot, there is one which is filled with documents taken from the German State Archives. Many of these documents deal with the Russo-German negotiations for the shameful pact of 1939." He paused for a moment, smiling sardonically. "You will understand that, politically speaking, the documents are greater treasure than the valuables contained in the other boxes."

Peter interrupted, "Disappointed, *Patapouf*?"

Anne-Marie smiled at him. "No, this sounds like the real thing." Turning back to Schmidt, she said, "Go on."

The German's blue eyes glinted with triumphant satisfaction. "Since the gentleman in the R.A.F. never dared to go back to his treasure, it still remains in its hiding place. I have managed to buy from him the directions for finding it, and now I have only to get to Northern Italy without being arrested or killed on the way. . . ."

"Killed! Is there a risk of that?"

"I am afraid there is more than a risk, Mrs. Parker," he admitted coolly. "When I left Germany I had to do so without permission. In my absence my political enemies laid a false charge of embezzlement against me. In consequence, the police of all countries are after me. However, much more grave is the fact that I have been proscribed by the Communist Party. They wish, themselves, to find these documents—but, if they cannot find them, they will be very satisfied to make quite sure that no friend of the Western Powers should do so. If I were to fall into the wrong hands I fear I should live only a very short while. . . ."

Anne-Marie slowly nodded. "How am I supposed to be able to help?"

The German leaned forward, his eyes intent and keen.

"Mr. Macready has already managed to find a man who flies his own cargo-carrying aircraft between London and Paris. . . ."

"Yes, I know that."

"Even though I could be said to be working for the Western Powers, I cannot take the risk of leaving England by ordinary means in case I should be arrested."

"So you mean to land in France by parachute," Anne-Marie commented. "I know that too. What happens afterwards?"

"Afterwards, Mrs. Parker, I propose to rely upon you to get me safely to the Italian-Swiss border." The charming smile showed itself again and Schmidt's intensely blue eyes lit with wicked humour. "I am told that you smuggled many wanted men from one side of France to the other during the war—under the noses of our notoriously efficient Gestapo. If you could succeed then, against such odds, I doubt that you will find it difficult to succeed again now."

"In those days half the population of France was active on our side," Anne-Marie said dubiously. "Now. . . ."

"In those days, also," Schmidt reminded her, "the country was alive with troops and security policemen."

She nodded.

PETER approached with a bottle in his hand, bending over their shoulders as he filled two glasses. "Briefing over?" he murmured. "Splendid. No hurry. Still twenty minutes to go, at least." He helped himself to whisky, raised his glass and said, "Happy landings, *tous les deux*." He was smiling, his intelligent brown eyes alive with impudent mischief. Presently, looking straight at Schmidt, he said with a cool gaiety which was almost insolent, "Now for the last, but very important item on the agenda, my dear Schmidt! Money! *Patapouf* and I would love to see its pretty colour."

Anne-Marie frowned, staring down at the table, embarrassed for the second time by Peter's facetiousness. The big German only nodded, however, and reached for his brief-case. He took out a thick wad of English notes of high denomination, counted out most of them and pushed the pile towards Peter. "One thousand five hundred pounds," he said quietly. "I hope that is correct."

Peter Macready took the money in his thin, quick hands. His face was avid. He counted it carefully, now and again holding a bill up to the light. Anne-Marie refused to watch him, finding the performance singularly vulgar. Presently, stuffing the wad into his breast pocket, he said, "Fifteen hundred it is. Ta ever so. . . . Oh, by the way. You owe me an extra two fifty for the passport, chum. Forgot to mention it. Sorry."

THERE was a silence. Anne-Marie looked up at Peter, then turned to the German. She saw Schmidt's nostrils dilate and his dark eyes harden. An abominable suspicion in her mind that Peter had been cheating was confirmed.

Schmidt made no comment, although his expression was filled with cold distaste. He reached for the brief-case, took out more money and thrust it, wordlessly, across the table. Peter picked it up, "*Danke, mein Herr*. That makes it square—like those heads we've all heard about." He turned to Anne-Marie. "Want your cut now, *Patapouf*?"

She was on her feet, glaring at him with sudden incredulous anger and distrust. "You . . . you *are* a filthy creature sometimes, Peter," she said bitterly. "You have the manners of a rat. No, I don't want it now. You've made me feel as if the money were diseased. Is that what you were trying to do?"

Peter exploded into bi-lingual apology, larded with mocking endearments, but the girl turned her back to him, taking a cigarette and lighting it with trembling fingers.

A T-shaped arrangement of flashlights, tied to sticks so that their flimsy beams would shine upwards, had been set out to mark the line of the airfield's main runway. At ten minutes to eleven, an elderly cargo-carrying DC-3 appeared and Bates, Peter's odd-job man and watchdog, ran down the line, switching on the lights. The plane circled once and came in to land, its

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JOURNEY INTO BRITAIN: Harry Hopkins reports from High Wycombe

TOWN THAT SPRANG UP ON CHAIR LEGS

Chalk in the soil produced the beech; the beechwoods bred the "bodger" working with his axe in the glades. On this has been built a £50,000,000 industry, taking its own revolutions in its stride

Owen Dean, one of the two surviving bodgers, shapes a chair leg on his shave-horse. The pole behind his head supplies power for his lathe

"OH BLESS YOU, my poor wife wouldn't know the place any more," said Clem Cousins, gazing down from his window above High Wycombe's Little Market House. Below, the endless stream of cars, buses and motor coaches poured by. There were high, box-like furniture vans, starting out on their deliveries to places all over Britain; a couple of timber lorries, backs piled with tree trunks, creeping around the sharp corner by the lights; and, at intervals, the strange double-deckers from the Pressed Steel Works at Oxford, bearing aloft the empty shells of motor-cars, gliding swiftly through the crowded streets like mechanized ghosts.

29 MILES TO LONDON, 25 MILES TO OXFORD, ran the worn inscription over the arches of the octagonal Little Market House, designed by the brothers Adam in 1761. Above, through the windows, could be seen the backs of the old men as they sat around the walls of the upper room, watching the finals of the billiards tournament.

A Stream Of Craftsmen

Clem Cousins, a sharp-eyed, sharp-featured man of eighty-nine, was the steward of the Old Folks Club and, like most of its members, had worked in the furniture trade. A cabinet-maker, he had started out in Bath, and might have gone on carrying his toolkit around the towns of the south had not his feet perspired so sensationally in Bournemouth that all the skin came off the soles. "This climate's no good for you," the doctor had said, and so, just before the first World War, Clem Cousins joined the stream of craftsmen moving in on High Wycombe.

He opened a cupboard and brought out his old saw, bending it appreciatively. "Just run your fingers down there," he said. "Bites, eh? They don't make 'em like that any more."

Below poured the line of cars and lorries which had swept past the smart new town centre, on past the Red Lion where Disraeli had stood on the portico, as a young man, to make his first election speech, on down High Wycombe's fine, wide, clean High Street, till it was brought up sharp against the pillars of the Guildhall, obtruding blankly, half across the road: the eighteenth century defying the twentieth.

A generation of motorists, speeding along A40, already fretted by four or five miles of narrowly "built-up area," have fumed and fussed before this outrageous obstruction; but the Guildhall has stayed. And there, perhaps, I decided, may

Clem Cousins (left) with members of the Old Folks Club he runs in Little Market House, seen behind him. Right, the Guildhall blocks the road—the eighteenth century defying the twentieth

Sergeant Higginson shows two visitors from Nairobi the drawing-room in Disraeli House

be the key to the essential nature of this place. For though High Wycombe, a village that grew up in a hurry, changed a great deal in the process (and often for the worse) it nevertheless somehow contrived, through it all, to remain unmistakably itself.

The city fathers, when you talk to them, have a habit of taking a little book out of their pockets and reciting the figures, not boastfully, but with the mild astonishment of parents confronting the facts of their infant's growth.

In the year 1871, High Wycombe had 4,811 inhabitants. By 1881, that figure had more than doubled and, henceforward, decade by decade, the increase went on—1901: 17,683; 1911: 23,870; 1931: almost 30,000. During the war, bombed-out East Enders brought the total up to 70,000, but by 1951, when all who were going back had gone back (and many didn't) the population stood at 40,692, having multiplied almost nine times in eighty years.

Fame From A Simple Need

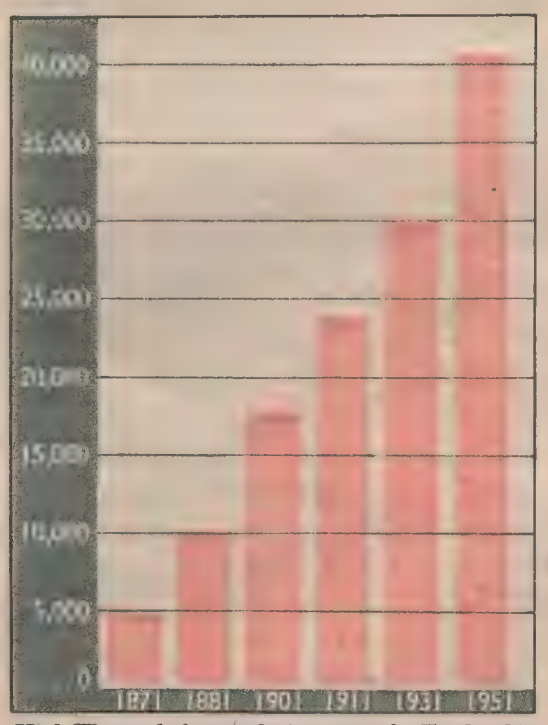
England is full of villages that grew up overnight; but few came through the experience so painlessly and, on the whole, so pleasantly, as High Wycombe. What was its secret? Can it be, perhaps, that the place rose to fame on its capacity to satisfy a simple but fundamental need of humanity—for something to sit upon?

In 1873, the American evangelists Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey arrived in Britain to capture the country for the Lord. At one point, however, the success of their revivalist meetings became imperilled by a serious shortage of seats. High Wycombe was appealed to, and High Wycombe did not fail. Within a short time, 19,200 chairs had been manufactured and placed at the disposal of the grateful evangelists. Righteousness was secure—and High Wycombe's reputation was made.

From that time onward, the name of High Wycombe was as firmly connected with chairs as Melton Mowbray's with meat pies, Luton's with straw hats or Wilton's with carpets. By the early years of this century, the place was being called the "Chairopolis" of Britain. Today, it is still turning out the greater part of the nation's chairs—all sorts of chairs, school chairs and church chairs, chairs for the Abbey for the Coronation and chairs for the kitchen, gilded banqueting chairs, round-backed desk chairs, fireside chairs, steamer chairs, armchairs.

Why this persistent preoccupation with chairs? The answer is instructive. It is rooted in geology, that great maker of human history.

It begins on the smooth green ridges of the Chilterns, confining High Wycombe in its narrow valley. As the eye runs over those grassy slopes, it catches, now and then, a glimpse of lumps of dead white rock. The Chilterns are chalk. And it so happens that beech trees flourish in chalk. Following the road down the centre of the narrow valley, or climbing up out of High Wycombe, the eye meets the fuzz of beechwoods crowning the horizon, hanging like a mist along the tops of the hills. Beech is a good timber for chair-making. Its grain is even. It splits regularly. It bends. It takes a good polish. Its bark is not wastefully thick.



High Wycombe's population growth. England is full of villages that grew up overnight, but few came through the experience so painlessly

The Last Two Survivors

So the chalk hills produced the beechwoods and the beechwoods bred the bodgers. More than two hundred years ago, Daniel Defoe in his *Tour Of England* wrote about the bodgers in the woods round High Wycombe, men who took their shack workshops to the trees rather than the trees to their workshops, who went to it with wedges and axes and primitive lathes in the depth of the forest, turning out a steady flow of chair legs and other parts which they sent off all over the country.

Sometimes, during the summer, the bodgers worked on farms or in orchards, returning to the woods in the winter. Within living memory, there were still hundreds of them at work in the beechwoods. Now there are a couple. To encounter them, one must set out with all the determination of Ludwig Koch in pursuit of some almost extinct species.

"A map!" exclaimed J. L. Mayse, High Wycombe's Librarian and Curator, and an experienced bodger-watcher. "Maps are no use, I'm afraid. No good at all. You may get a report of a bodger at one spot in the morning, and then, by the afternoon—gone. You need to be able to read all the signs. We ought to make an early start, immediately after lunch."

The expedition took the Speen road out of the town, driving down the fine wide High Street, past the obtruding Guildhall, past the ugly bay-windowed Victorian villas and terraces that almost—but not quite—engulf the old High Wycombe, and then up the winding hill, past

The craftsmen who are being ousted by machines: George Smewin (left) and John Hudson at work. They may take two weeks to make a single chair

High Wycombe's mayoress, Mrs. Clarke, is weighed in the ceremony which has become a tradition—and a "reproduction history" export

the little stone church on the Hughenden hillside where Disraeli, in death, receives the annual tributes of the Primrose League, gently upwards, out of the valley bottom, upwards into the Chilterns through a leafy calendar-picture countryside, studded with the neat green footpath signs of the Bucks County Council.

We were soon in the beechwoods. The tree trunks, grey-green and coolly beautiful, enclosed the road, turning it into an endless aisle. After some time, Mayse stopped the car. "Now, according to a report I got last night," he said, "he should be around in there somewhere." A track ran off between the trunks. They were, I noted with some surprise, tall and spindly. A beech tree in a wood, largely self-sown—"the Buckinghamshire weed"— is, it seems, a very different thing from the stately giant of a park. But equally useful for chair legs.

Our "Bodger" Had Flown

"Is that smoke rising over there? No-o-o, perhaps not." Shading our eyes like Indian scouts, we gazed down between the endless trunks, unfamiliar and mysterious as the bottom of the sea, with their subtle harmonies of light and colour. Mayse darted forward triumphantly. "Ah, look at those ruts—there's been a cart down here quite recently."

But we were too late. Our bodger had flown, leaving behind him nothing but a wide circle of wood shavings, carpeting the clearing. Mayse turned the shavings over with his boot: "See this finer stuff—those are turnings. He had his hut and the pole-lathe just there."

We returned to the hunt. A couple of the Earl of Buckingham's estate workers, lopping off branches near the roadside, gave us the latest news. "Bear left . . . over by the Hillocks . . . he's in there, somewhere." The Earl of Buckingham owns most of the beechwoods around here—and a landowner whose wealth lies mainly in his ancestors' timber is a fortunate man, as landowners go these days. A beechwood can be worth £2,000 an acre.

We drove on, watching the woods on both sides for clues. A little ahead we spotted a small pile of sacks standing on the roadside. Mayse pulled up beside it. He thrust a hand into the top sack, and brought out a chair leg—white, wet, newly turned. The scent was hot. We hurried off down a track. Mayse halted, and pointed, triumphantly. "There! See that! He's there all right." I could see nothing. "Just there—that little shack between the trees. Watch the side of it . . . there! See the chair leg pop out of that little hole . . . that's where he puts them as they come off his lathe."

A fresh-complexioned, sharp-featured little man, with an axe in his hand, emerged from behind the wooden shack. It was Owen Dean. We had found our bodger. Felled tree-trunks lay in a small circle around the rough hut. "Just had 'em pulled in," said Dean. "Enough butts there, I reckon, to keep me going for pretty well a year. But just look at this . . ." he darted off to show us a twisted and warped trunk lying among the straight ones . . . "what am I going to do with that? Hardly get a leg out of it. You have to take what they give you these days. And it's all five shillings a cube just the same. Used to be sixpence."

He set to with his splitting-out axe, splitting the sections of trunk, already sawn to the proper length into billets just big enough to turn into chair legs. *Clock-clock* rang out the heavy axe, echoing gently through the wood. The hand was firm, the aim exact. The split-off billets piled steadily on the ground.

Using Natural Strength

Primitive? Perhaps. But a leg made from split timber, they tell you in High Wycombe, is stronger than a leg machine-sawn. The split follows the grain, uses the strength of Nature; the saw may cut across it.

After the splitting, the chopping—shaping the billet on a high chopping block to the rough outline of a leg. For chopping, a different axe is needed: short-handled, bevelled on one side only, kept very sharp. *Chop . . . Chop*. The long splinters flew. "Do you know," said Owen Dean, with quiet satisfaction, "I'm the interval signal on TV now. Not all the time, you know, just sometimes."

After the chopping, the draw-shave, the leg taking shape gripping the arm of the shave-horse. And then, inside the hut, the climax of the whole process, centring on the strange survival from a simpler age, the pole-lathe—so called because part of its motive power comes from the tension of a bough or springy sapling, bent over by a length of cord tied to its end. The leg is screwed into the lathe, and the cord from the pole passed round it and linked at its other end with a wooden treadle.

This rudimentary device, in Dean's expert hands, seemed almost miraculously efficient. The cord jumped up and down, the legs spun merrily in the lathe, rapidly developing the familiar curves and ridges as the lathe tools in Dean's hands cut into it. Once a year, or so, he does a batch of rounder bats for the London County Council's education department; and once there was an American senator who, locating him in his forest hideout, handed out specifications for a one-hundred-per-cent American baseball bat—and got it, too.

A Dozen Legs In A Day

The finished chair leg, white and still damp from the tree, was shot out through the small hole on to the growing pile outside, and another took its place in the ancient lathe. Dean sells his legs to Mealings, the High Wycombe chair makers, who also take the output of four other "free-lance" turners (although only one of them qualifies as a genuine bodger, working in the woods on a pole-lathe). In a day, Dean told me a bodger can turn out ten to a dozen legs, which by long custom include half that number of stretchers—the supporting struts.

Over on the edge of the wood the Vale of Aylesbury fell away, its bright light filtering towards us through the trees. "How would you feel about going into a factory?" I asked Owen Dean. The little man grunted. "That's exactly what I shall be doing, judging by the money I hear they're making," he said. He had developed, in his forest, quite a gift for confounding interviewers.

And yet, I found, chairs made from legs and stretchers turned by bodgers working in the woods could still undersell the mass-produced machine product. That is the extraordinary

thing about High Wycombe: it can still span the whole technological development of chair-making, from the most primitive methods of the pre-factory age to the most up-to-date production planning. The place is a living textbook of England's social and economic history.

At first the bodgers' products had gone all over the country to be made up into chairs. Then, in 1805, the year of Trafalgar, Samuel Treacher, a farmer on Marlow Hill, to the south of the town, had the idea of putting his labourers to work during the slack winter months making up chairs. Five years later, another High Wycombe man, Thomas Widginton, put up a small wooden factory in St. Mary Street, employing twenty or thirty men making up chairs all the year round. These two men, duly commemorated in a stained glass window in the Town Hall, were the founding fathers of Chairopolis.

Power Saws—And Music

There are 140 furniture factories around High Wycombe today, turning out something like £50,000,000 worth of products a year. Look up any street, almost, and your eye is caught by the big inverted red cones of their dust extractors. The scream of the power saws mingles with the strains of *Music While You Work*. Yet—and how characteristic of the place this is—the very first factory of all, Thomas Widginton's little workshop of 1810, is still producing furniture. Widginton's great-great-grandson is on the board of the famous family firm that uses it.

The old workshop lies at the end of a long narrow timber yard where stacks of sawn wood lie seasoning (one year, one inch). You pass between the high stacks, climb a flight of wooden steps, push open a creaky door—and enter a forgotten world.

In mass-production factories, those characteristic institutions of our times, everything, human and inanimate, has its precisely regulated place. It is a first principle of good management that the floor-space should be kept clear; all excrescences swept away.

How different here! Beams of yellow sunlight, filtering through the small-paned windows, fell upon a scene of rich confusion. Tools lay about in heaps on well-worn benches. Others were festooned around the walls and roof. Chairs and fragments of chairs of intricate designs lay about the uneven floor. The pace of life seemed to slow perceptibly. Here, it could be felt, things were not manufactured. They grew.

Two or three white-aproned men of indeterminate middle-age worked away quietly, each in his corner, each to himself. George Smewin, a chairmaker here for nearly half a century, was just then fitting a delicately curving arm to a Chippendale "ladder-back" that would presently lend dignity to some British Embassy abroad. Behind him, half-finished, were piled several of the firm's "Adam" chairs, with elaborate spider backs. Each of those Adam chairs meant two weeks' steady work for George Smewin.

Once Worked For Kings

At another bench, not far away, John Hudson, foreman carver, bent over a highly carved protuberance that would shortly form part of a Jacobean table leg. He wore spectacles—and that quiet, kindly, almost ruminative air that seems to belong to workers in wood.

When Hudson first came to Nicholls and Janes, there were thirty carvers on the bench. Their work sold to American dealers and millionaires, to crowned heads of Europe and the potentates of the East. Now there were just two carvers left. Certainly tastes had changed—and the crowned heads were fewer. But there was more to it than that.

"Now see this," said John Hudson, producing an elaborate strip of carved cherubs and angels with trumpets, the front of a reproduction chair. "I can make four of these, and still earn £3 less than a man on machine-made stuff

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The old way. High Wycombe's librarian and curator, J. L. Mayse, explains to visitors the operation of the pole lathe and other equipment used by the "bodger" for making chair legs

And the new. Automatic lathe for producing chair legs and supporting struts. Unmachined parts are fed to operators in trays of twenty, seen on right, to avoid wasting time in counting

DIGBY

by DAVID WALKER

Drunkenness, assault, a compromising photograph. . . . The whole shocking story reached New York—and Madeleine

IN SCOTLAND—AND IN LOVE—was Digby P. Ross. He had come to the land of his ancestors for a complete change. In New York, where he was president of a giant corporation, he had been suffering from neryes and overwork. He had also had a row with his wife Madeleine, which looked like ending in divorce.

What he needed, he'd told himself, was fishing, shooting and Highland air. He'd got them all, and something more: within a few hours of his arrival, he'd met the only woman in the world for him.

She was a wild Highland Venus called Fiona Kilburnie, niece of his host and cousin-in-law, Colonel Galbraith. Voluptuous, auburn-haired, passionate, she lived in a castle, the Birks, with her Scottish nanny. Her hobby appeared to be love, but there was a serious side to her: she was chieftain of her Clan.

Digby began to realize what this meant when he heard of the ancient and bloody feud between the Kilburnies and the Tarrs. The two families, now represented by Fiona and young Lord Balgersho, who lived nearby, still kept it up.

Hamish Balgersho turned out to be a handsome, rakish type with a distinguished war record as a fighter pilot, and a propensity for hopping about the countryside in a ramshackle old plane. Digby quite liked him. But Fiona's splendid bosom heaved with indignation whenever he was near.

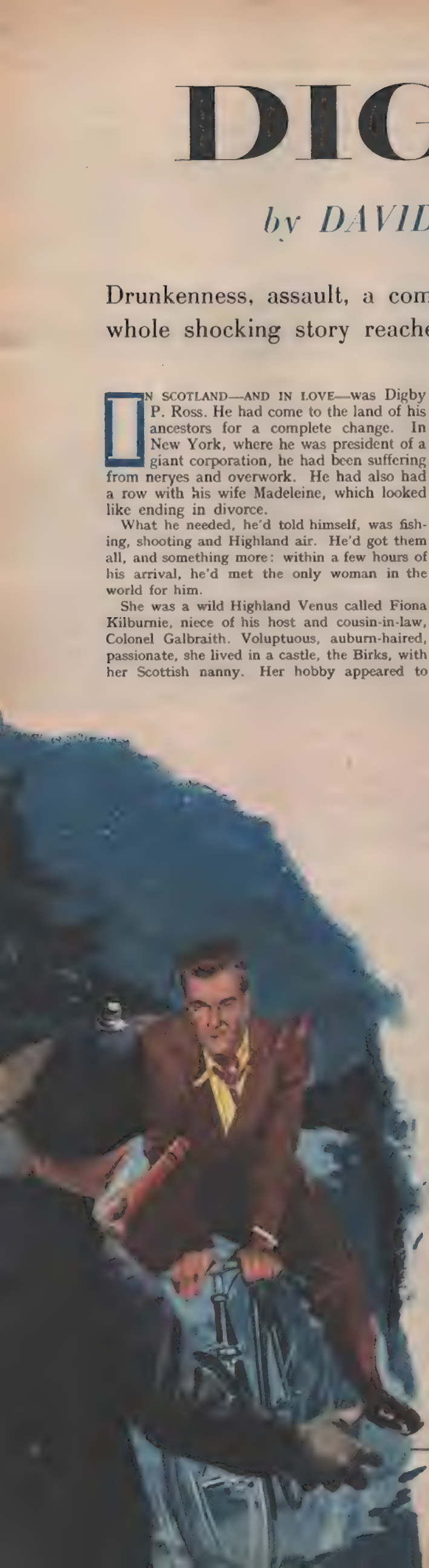
So far, Digby felt he wasn't doing too badly. He had shot a snipe, just missed a twenty-pound salmon, and filled the colonel's face with lead by mistake.

Above all, there was Fiona Kilburnie of the Birks. They had been attracted to each other from the start; and one evening, after a great deal of whisky, he had stayed at the castle until far in the night.

And when Fiona discovered that his middle name was Prissitulchan, which made them distant cousins, she had honoured him by inviting him to a Gathering of the Clan.

Shakily, his head spinning with love and whisky, Digby started back for Glendrogan, the colonel's house, on a borrowed bicycle. He was blissfully unaware that the law was lying in wait for him.

Constable McIntoon, the unpopular local bobby, was determined to arrest *somebody* tonight. . . .



"Halt, in the name of the law!" McIntoon roared. Digby knew he must either stop—or ride him down

"Please, please, please, Digby," Fiona wheedled, rub

PART 3

Breach Of The Peace

MEDICAL men say that the human engine sags to its lowest and slowest in the early hours of the morning. Digby's engine, however, was an exception shortly after 2 a.m. on August the fourteenth. He felt splendid as he bicycled back down the avenue. The royal stags were still browsing. The moonlight gave cool and adequate illumination.

The hand of destiny lies over all, Digby thought. It was ordained from the beginning that I should come to the Highlands to learn what love can be.

Fiona! What a girl! She could make a fortune in Hollywood, that baby, that Bebby. But too proud. She loves her clan too much. I would not love my clan so much, loved I not Digby more. . . .

Oh, Love! And not only a physical thing. No, not by any means. So wise and passionately different from anyone I ever knew.

Hitherto Digby had not spoken. Now, as he passed in good order through ivy-mantled stag-emblazoned gates to the public road, he felt a great need to shout and sing and vie with the moon for possession of this night land. Something that shouted a wild rhythm, driving the right foot and the left, the right foot and the left, down upon the pedals. Far away he saw the bridge. A bridge! Ah, yes, he had it! Just the right tempo. Treasured all these years by the photographic memory which was his gift:

"He reeled, and on Herminius
He leaned one breathing space;
Then, like a wild cat mad with wounds,
Sprang right at Astur's face;
Through teeth, and skull, and helmet
So fierce a thrust he sped,
The good sword stood a hand-breadth out
Behind the Tuscan's head."

It's the wrong way round, Digby thought. Horatius was defending, and I'm charging the bridge. Oh well, never mind, the principle's the same.

His left foot slipped off the pedal. The bicycle lurched, weaved over and back across the narrow road. "Steady!" he cried. Mind triumphed over matter. He rode on with mighty voice:

"On Astur's throat Horatius
Right firmly pressed his heel,
And thrice and four times tugged amain,
Ere he wrenched out the steel.
'And see,' he cried, 'the welcome,
Fair guests, that waits you here!
What noble Lucumo comes next
To taste our Roman cheer?'"

Digby bellowed that challenge. He was beside

bing her cheek against his. A blinding flash suddenly lit up the cell. They turned in alarm. It was Carmen Graves, with a camera. "Thanks a lot," she said

himself. He was Horatius the wrong way round. He rode into the ditch. "Come, come," he remarked severely to himself, stung by nettles, otherwise unhurt and undismayed. He mounted again, and now he was lined up for the assault. He remembered that bridge with a two-foot parapet on either side, a bad cycling bridge at any time, definitely a hazard now in his elated condition. I'll have to take it fast, he thought. I'll have to charge the goddam hump-backed thing and go up over through and down the other side. . . . Courage then, Ross!

Digby was rather high for the second time since college days. His college days came now to help him negotiate this tricky obstacle. Of a sudden, he was back in the stadium of the crimson banners. He fell off and got on again.

But there was song:

"O'er the stands in flaming crimson
Harvard banners fly;
Cheer on cheer, like volleyed thunder,
Echoes to the sky.
See the crimson tide is turning
Gaining more and more
Then fight, fight, fight, for we win tonight,
Old Harvard for evermore."

He lined up dead-centre, faster and faster and faster. . . . *"H-a-r-v-a-r-d!—rah, rah, rah, rah, rah, rah, rah!—fight, team, fight!"*

The cool wind touched his heated face. The pedals twinkled as Digby swept good and true over the hump—limpid water far down below on either side—and the envious McIntoon came out of hiding.

He barred the way, right hand up, constabular buttons gleaming unmistakably even to a stranger from overseas.

"Halt!" he shouted harshly. "Halt in the name of the law!"

Sharp-needled intuition told Digby that the application of brakes would spell disaster. Self-preservation gave him no alternative but to ride the man down. Among many detestable virtues, McIntoon possessed a certain dogged courage. He stood his ground.

They clashed at some twenty miles per hour. The constable was brushed aside; Digby lurched, reeled and fell heavily. A pedal twirled, a wheel spun on with aimless hum; otherwise silence till he got up. He felt himself. Miraculously, he was okay. The heavy footsteps of the policeman.

"Look here, officer," panted Digby wrathfully. "Why in hell didn't you come out sooner? How d'you expect me to stop on a little gangplank of a bridge? What is this, anyway?"

"I'll tell ye what this is," said McIntoon. He was a tall, thin man with cadaverous cheeks, a waxed moustache, a down-hung mouth. Even in moonlight you could tell at once how right Fiona had been when she called him a stinker. "This is, firstly, riding a bicycle without lights in hours of darkness—secondly, breach of the peace in shoutin' insults and bad language while riding said bicycle—thirdly, drunk and disorderly in charge of a vehicle, to wit, said bicycle—fourthly, simple assault in that you did assault Angus McIntoon, a constable of the Crummockshire Constabulary, by striking him a severe blow on the arm and shoulder with said bicycle. And I'm to state that anything you say will be noted in writing and may be used in evidence in court."

ILLUSTRATED BY SHOWELL

DIGBY's blood was up. Furthermore, he came from a country where a certain amount of give and take, even abuse, is recognized in exchanges with police officers—not that Digby was the kind of man who was ever rude to anyone. But to have a list of verbatim charges reeled off at you in that self-righteous gloating Scotch voice, that coming on top of the shock and everything else was the last straw.

"Listen, flatfoot!" he snarled. "Don't you try any Gestapo tricks on me. I am a free man and an American citizen. I may as well add for your information that if you so much as raise that bludgeon I see in your right hand, I shall not be responsible for my actions."

"Will you come quiet?" said the relentless constable, moving closer and raising his bludgeon. "Or will I need to put the handcuffs on ye?" He put his left hand out to grasp Digby by the shoulder.

Now, for the first time—one of many recent

How could Digby make such a laughing-stock of her? Madeleine thought. Into the phone she said: "I want to make a call to Scotland"

firsts, but by far the most disastrous—Digby P. Ross, man of peace, prominent executive, humanist, saw the red beacon of fury before his eyes. He parried the left hand, ducked, took a heavy and painful blow on his own left shoulder, but he was inside the policeman's guard. He was a strong man, unskilled in fisticuffs, and he might have botched his blow. He did not. The upper-cut travelled only a few inches past silver buttons to the long chin. It was a beautiful grunting punch.

EVEN as Digby saw his adversary sag and topple backwards, he saw also the enormity of what he had done.

"Oh, my God!" he muttered just before the constable's head thudded against a boulder at the roadside. The man sighed and lay still.

Digby knelt beside him. The heart, the heartbeat? No heartbeat. Oh, but there was. Slow, regular. Well, that was something. He looked round wildly. His first instinct was to get on the bicycle and beat it to Glendrogan while there yet was chance of escape. A lesser man might have done just that. But here was a fellow creature in distress.

Accordingly, Digby seized the unconscious McIntoon by the shoulders, pulled him to a sitting position, remembered the fireman's lift learned and practised often as a volunteer when they lived on Long Island, somehow heaved him up like a long blue sack of potatoes in the prescribed fashion, and staggered along the road. The baton dangled from a slack wrist, tapped futile little taps on Digby's thigh at each step. *I've killed the guy,* he thought.

By the time he reached the village, Digby was groaning and gasping for breath. He leaned against a wall to rest. He was pretty well all in. He became aware of a figure lurking, only one figure in the deserted square. It was a short, thickset man. "Is yon the polisman?" he whispered. "Is he deid?"

"Unconscious," Digby panted. "Help me!"

The man dropped a long, sacked object from his hand. It flapped spasmodically on the road.

"Did ye hit 'im?" he said with awe. "Did ye clock the beggar?"

"Yes," Digby said. Although tormented by anxiety, he was still proud of that punch. "Right on the kisser. Bingo! Come on."

Together they carried McIntoon to his cottage, and propped him against the door. He slept on. Digby knocked.

"This is no' the place for me. I'll need to be away. Whyn't you get off yer marks while the goin's good?"

"I guess I'll stay," Digby said. "Thanks a lot for helping."

"Man," said the stranger. "Man, I'm fair proud o' ye. I'd fine like to have seen yon punch, a braw blow struck for the Glen." He looked at the constable's inert body and spat. "If ye're needin' evidence, Donny Cleghorn's the name. Just send word what I'm to say." He slipped off as quietly as a cat. He was a natural traveller by night.

Footsteps, and the door opened. McIntoon fell inward at the feet of a sleepy youngish woman in a wrapper. She gasped.

"Mrs. McIntoon," Digby said. Was that the name? "I'm afraid your husband got hurt. I'll help you in with him."

"Aye up in the middle o' the nicht," she grumbled, grasping her man's shoulders. "Aye tryin' to catch folk. I tellt him. I says, 'McIntoon, one o' these fine days ye'll be found wi' a bullet in yer back.' But would he listen? Och no, just went on poking his long neb in ither folk's business."

"He hit his head," Digby said to this unexpected ally. "I don't *think* it can be very bad."

"A muckle lump like a pullet's egg," said Mrs. McIntoon. She was a nice fat comely woman. "But the heart's strong. Och, he'll be fine. Are you the American gentleman I was hearin' about?" She took a wet cloth and squeezed it over her husband's face.

"Yes," Digby said. His breath was coming back, but he was very tired.

The policeman stirred, moaned, muttered "Assault" distinctly, shook his head, and sat up straight. His gaze wavered, then focused on Digby: "Now, will ye come quiet?"

"I've come," Digby said, vastly relieved. "I'm here. I carried you home." He had more than made up for what he had done. However, he added: "Sshorry, officer, quite unintentional."

The handcuffs clinked as McIntoon drew them from his pocket.

"Angus!" cried Mrs. McIntoon. "What'll the currnel say, and this American gentleman the currnel's guest up at the big hoose?"

"I'm no carin' what the colonel says. I'm doin' my duty as an officer of the law assaulted in the execution of his duty." He went across the room. "I arrest you. . . ."

"Arrest away," Digby said, holding out his wrists. "Do your worst, you miserable cop. If that's your idea of justice, certainly arrest me and take the consequences."

"It's you'll take the consequences." McIntoon adjusted the handcuffs, staggered slightly, shook his head.

DIGBY said calmly: "Okay. I see you have a telephone. Put me through at once to the American consul."

"I'll do no such thing."

"I am aware of my rights," Digby said. "As an arrested American citizen I have the right of immediate access to the representative of my country. I demand that right."

The constable shook his head. "Not when inebriated," he said judiciously.

"Am I drunk, Mrs. McIntoon?"

"Sober as a minister. I'll swear it on the Bible." Mrs. McIntoon had had a hard life being wedded to relentless bigotry. She did not know why she turned now finally against her husband after all these years, except that he had been worse than ever lately, and she liked the looks of this handsome American who had carried McIntoon home on his own back. It was true he smelled strongly of whisky and his eyes were a wee bit glazed. But drunk? No! "I'll take the oath in court," she said.

"Two against one," said Digby. Three, actually, if what he remembered about somebody else outside was right, but he wasn't quite sure in the middle of everything. "Now will you get my consul? I shall be pleased to pay for the call."

"First the particulars," said Constable McIntoon, licking his pencil.

After the laborious taking of particulars there was a long wait while male voices sounded on the telephone from Trunks, and Mrs. McIntoon warmed the teapot. Her husband kept muttering to himself. Nobody had ever hit him before; he was beginning to be uneasy.

Digby, too, had doubts, not of the righteousness of his cause, but because something was happening to him minute by minute in the hot kitchen, had happened—he was not going to make sense on the telephone. He tried planning sentences and then forgot them. What a fool I am, he thought. But it was too late.

THE consul of the United States was sleepy. He was also bored. He had met these two in the interval of a concert. "Come on back for a drink after, why don't you?" he had said because they were personable people and celebrities as well.

So they had come back, Cyrus Becker and Carmen Graves, foreign correspondents. That was four hours ago. Since then he had been privileged to watch his liquor dwindle and to listen to their war reminiscences. Now the end of the war seemed to be in sight, and it was three fifteen in the morning.

"Let me give you a fill-up, Miss Graves," he suggested politely.

She nodded her sleek head. They said she was the toughest and most fearless one of the whole lot, which was annoying, too. "Cy, darling, do you remember that boy with his arms shot off at the elbow and the wrist who asked me to hold his hand because I reminded him of his girl in Butte, Montana? Do you remember the piece I wrote about that poor kid?"

"Sure. That was right up your alley."

The consul put Miss Graves's glass on the table beside her. "Telephone," she said, before he heard it. She went on talking.

Who would call him this late? Unless it was trouble. "Excuse me," he said to his unheeding guests, and went out into the hall.

"Yes?" he said guardedly.

"Is that the American consul?"

"Who wants him?"

"Police Constable Mc-something at Blub-blub Crummockshire," the voice said. It was hard enough to understand them face to face, but on the phone! Mumble, mumble, mumble. Something about an American citizen in custody, wanting to talk.

He sighed. "Consul speaking. Put him on the line."

"Are you the United States consul?"

"Speaking," he said again. He was a patient man; he had to be.

"This is Digby P. Ross, of New York City. I am presently visiting in the Highlands. I need your help. Can you hear me?"

He could hear him perfectly well. He had this guy ticketed and more or less located already. (*a*) He had been drinking; (*b*) he spoke with that high-hat Boston-Harvard accent which never failed to prickle the consul, a man from Springfield, Illinois. "Go on, Mr. Ross."

"I have been unjustly arrested. I was

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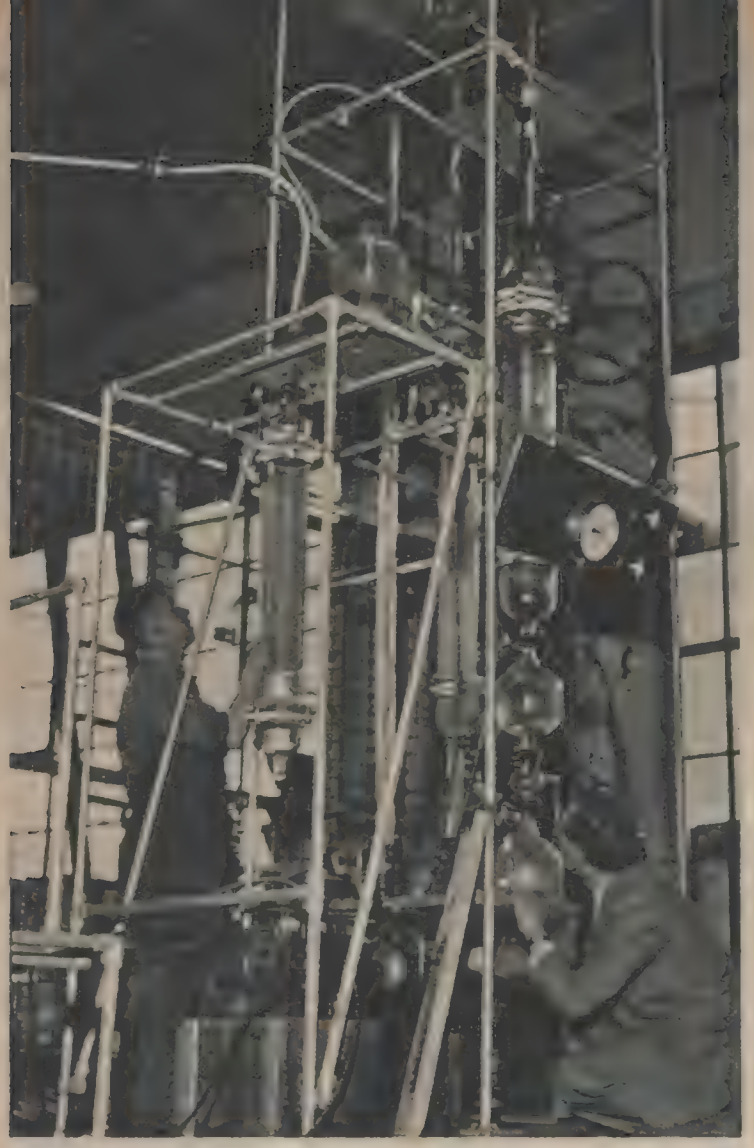


Testing an experimental glass climbing evaporator. Scientific equipment is now turned out in thousands of shapes and sizes

Parts of a "visible flow" plant. New types of glass now being made outshine plastics and will stand temperature changes better than metal

Dr. Cox plans the new glass age

by CHARLES WAUGH

In his laboratory, he is doing more than make the housewife's dream come true. His glass can be made red hot without breaking

GEORGE DIXON is a burly, forty-two year old Durham craftsman, who daily breakfasts on a mixture of sand, silica and borax. In a setting suited to Macbeth's witches, he stirs this strange potion in a cauldron heated to 1,600 degrees Centigrade, then, with a wand that is more practical than magical, spoons out a portion of molten fire and turns it into shimmering glassware.

Dixon, a master glassblower, performs this rite at nine every morning, the traditional breakfast or "baketime," while his men, who have been working since six, knock off for a more conventional meal. Glassblowers use skill rather than witchcraft in their work, yet there is more than a trace of sorcery in the transformation of sand and chemicals into dishes, test tubes and television components. Science has not solved all the mysteries of the glass-making process, and while Dr. Shaun Cox, Dixon's scientific chief, may dream in his laboratory of glass plumbing and even glass engines, Dixon and his men still work in a way that would not seem strange to a glassblower of three centuries or more ago.

The chief difference between his predecessors and Dixon is the type of glass in which he works. Pyrex brand ovenware was invented in the United States less than forty years ago, and the first batch produced in this country was made in 1921 at the Sunderland factory where Dixon works.

Biggest Advance To Date

Scientists called it boro-silicate glass and recognized its discovery as the most important advance that the glass industry had made. Its toughness and ability to withstand sudden changes in temperature gave housewives glass dishes for oven-cooking, presented scientists with a stronger and wider range of laboratory vessels, and offered brewers, dairies and distilleries new types of glass pipelines.

It was also a boon to radar and television pioneers. Dixon himself blew a quarter of a million radar tubes at a rate of 300 a day during the war. Working under him today is a man who turns out 150 television tubes every shift. Each of them starts as a twelve-pound blob of molten glass—the blowers call it "metal"—gathered up like syrup from the furnace.

While new uses for heat-resisting glass are still being found in industry, laboratory and home, Dr. Cox looks to a new glass age based on an even tougher glass that is still in the development stage. This new glass cannot be broken by heat. It can be made red hot and dropped into icy water without breaking. When perfected it will more than double the temperature range in which glass can be used. "It outshines plastics," says Dr. Cox. "It will be used in place of metals, because metals do pack up at comparatively low temperatures, and we are entering an age of new processes at extremely high temperatures."

Cox, a glass enthusiast, has a dramatic way of demonstrating the properties of his favourite material. In his laboratory he places an aluminium frying pan inside a glass frying pan, and proceeds to melt the metal. "It can be done," he says, "if you are careful."

He is scientific director, and Dixon is foreman glass blower, at the Wear Glass Works operated by James A. Jobling and Company, Limited, in Sunderland. Near the banks of the Wear, where the Venerable Bede reported glass being made twelve centuries ago, this works turns out 26,000,000 glasses a year, together with a half a million percolator tops and about two and a half million baby bottles. Eighty-five different utensils are produced for domestic use. Laboratory equipment is turned out in thousands of shapes and sizes, from tiny, five millilitre beakers as small as a thimble, to huge flasks holding two hundred litres. The factory also specializes in glass piping made in diameters up to eighteen inches.

Dixon started in the factory as a boy of fourteen at £1 a week and got himself transferred to

A huge rectifying bulb being taken from its mould. It is blown partly by compressed air

Miss M. Harrison blows a test tube. An expert can judge by eye the amount of glass required

Foreman George Dixon takes a test sample. To him, bubbles in blown glass are telltale signs

the glasshouse, where the blowing is done, to become a knocker-off—who removes the excess glass from the blown article. With his future in mind, young Dixon watched for an opportunity to use the blower's gathering pipe at mealtimes or at the end of a shift.

A gathering pipe is about five feet long and its diameter varies from five-eighths of an inch to one and three-quarter inches, according to the size of the article to be blown. The first knack to be mastered in using the pipe is to gather the right amount of molten glass. The items a blower may be called upon to make can need anything from a few ounces of "metal" up to sixty pounds, and an expert can judge the amount by eye to within a few ounces.

Easier Than A Balloon

Dixon was seventeen by the time he got his first chance to blow a piece of glass. His original piece was a small laboratory glass about three inches high. Dixon gathered the metal on his pipe, lifted it out of the pot and let the rod swing in an arc to stretch out the glass. He blew gently—"you don't require wind, just breathe in. It's easier than a rubber balloon"—and let the metal harden sufficiently to go in the mould. He kept spinning the pipe as he blew, and felt the glass tighten inside the mould. At the right moment, the pipe was severed from the glass. The mould holder opened the wooden box, and there was a three-inch beaker.

"There was £5 in my wages that week," Dixon still remembers, twenty-five years later.

After more experience Dixon became the key man in his own "shop," with his own ballmaker to gather the glass, form it into a ball and hand it to him. Dixon would then dip it back into the pot, add more glass and blow. He learned the art of judging the right thickness—and to drink the three or four pints of beer that blowers consume to counteract the heat. Nowadays, the price of beer is gradually turning the craftsmen into tea drinkers.

While learning the craft, young blowers usually have trouble with their lips, where callouses form, and with their hands. A "beat hand" caused by blisters becoming septic is a common complaint among beginners. As they adapt themselves to the work, they tend to specialize in certain sized objects, according to their strength. The men who can handle big, heavy articles are regarded as the most skilled.

As foreman glass blower, Dixon is responsible for the daily inspection of the molten glass. The furnace, or tank, melts 110 tons of glass in a series of clay pots, and Dixon tests the contents by blowing an article from each batch. He looks for "cord"—threads of glass—and for the number of bubbles in the blown glass. Too many fine bubbles usually mean the furnace is overloaded and the blowers are taking out more molten glass than the fire can melt properly.

Top Of Furnace Melted

Normally the furnace burns for two years before it has to be rebuilt, but Dixon's greatest crisis came one morning when the top of the furnace melted and fell into the pots. While the furnace may last as long as four or five years without requiring rebuilding, the individual pots containing the molten glass have to be replaced after six months. They are put in by sweating workmen who, by tradition, receive "hot money" for the job.

After sampling the melt, Dixon decides the articles to be blown from each pot and the fourteen blowers and their "shops" go into action. Their output, while still warm, goes into annealing ovens in which the glass objects travel along a wide belt through gradually diminishing temperatures. If a piece of glass was left to cool without annealing, the inside would cool more slowly than the outside, and the resulting strain would cause it to fly into pieces.

Pyrex glass was originally invented as an answer to a problem caused by ordinary glass breaking through heat on one side and cold on the other. Just before the first World War, American railroads suffered several disasters that might have been prevented if the lenses on signal lamps had not been broken because the heat from the flame inside caused the glass to shatter in icy weather. Scientists at Cornling, New York, developed boro-silicate glass to withstand these strains.

The new glass was also used for making battery jars. One night, about thirty-five years ago, a research man took home with him the bottom of a glass battery case—and an idea.

"Would you like to try baking a pie in that?" he asked his wife.

"In a glass dish?" she replied, astonished. "Why, the glass will break into bits."

"Just try it," said her husband. The pie was a success. There was not even a crack in the jar—and glass ovenware was born.

Makers Were Sceptical

According to Cox, English glassmakers scoffed at the idea of housewives ever cooking in glass dishes. Jobling's decided to take a chance and bought the British rights to Pyrex. They have since become the biggest manufacturers of heat-resisting ovenware, laboratory ware and industrial glass outside the United States. Two out of three British homes now use glass ovenware.

"I even had to be converted to the idea of cooking in glass myself," Cox recalls. Instead of taking a glass dish home to his wife, he mixed a cake in his laboratory. He placed equal amounts in tinned and Pyrex dishes, connected a thermometer to each and placed them in the oven. "The tinned dish threw back the heat," Cox says. "The glass dish acted like a greenhouse, trapping radiant heat, and cooked the cake in half the time."

Housewives often write to Jobling's asking for more utensils made of glass. Not long ago a request came in for a glass tea cosy and from Ireland have come several inquiries about a hot water bottle that can also be used to keep the baby's feeding bottle warm.

Now the trend is for wider industrial use, as engineers overcome their suspicion that an article made of glass must break. One of Cox's colleagues thinks the answer to this fear of breakage may have been found in South Wales, where a factory installed a cooling system using four thousand feet of glass pipe fastened with metal flanges. Twice a year the system was dismantled for inspection and reports of breakages came in. Jobling's sent a man to investigate and, to their delight, found that the glass pipes were intact while all the damage was to the metal flanges. The workmen were dropping metal parts on the floor, but the glass they handled with care.

Another industrial use, however, emphasizes the fragility of glass. During the war, measuring gauges made of glass were introduced. If a metal gauge was dropped, it might become inaccurate, but it could still be used. Glass ended the possibility of using a gauge made inaccurate by misuse. If the glass gauge fell on the floor, it broke and had to be replaced.

Run Their Own Brewery

One major industrial use of glass pipes is in the brewing, distilling and dairy trades. Fourteen million gallons of milk pass through Pyrex pipelines each year. Appropriately enough, brewers use the glass pipeline extensively, and the chances are that Dixon and his thirsty glassblowers drink beer that has passed through pipes made in their own factory.

In fact, the beer itself could be brewed there. To show the advantages of this type of glass, the blowers and manipulators have made a working model of a brewery. According to Dixon, the model has only one disadvantage: its capacity is limited to four and a half gallons. Some glassblowers have no doubt they could drink the entire output single-handed. THE END

Bobbie couldn't stop yelling in excitement. But behind him old John stood tense and silent. He tried to call Darkstar's name but no sound came

Come on, Darkstar!

by DUDLEY HOYS

Everything the old man had was staked on Darkstar—including his son's future

IT WAS A queer business. Just before nine on that mild February morning I had gone up the fell in search of a strayed ram. I plodded up the trod at the back of the farm. At a height of about a thousand I turned east along a comparatively level stretch bronzed by old brackens and sprinkled with boulders. Away to the right, the fell-breast sloped down to the twining trough of Iredale below.

Fleet, the dog I had brought with me, gave a sudden, sharp yelp. There was the softest of pattering sounds. Over a rib of rock came a dark, rippling body, racing diagonally for the dale. It was a trail-hound, and I recognized it as Darkstar, belonging to a neighbour of mine, old John Lingward of Stonebank. By the way he moved, I knew that Darkstar was following an actual trail. That was a surprising thing. Somebody must have been out early to lay a trail of aniseed and paraffin over the fells simply for the sake of giving one hound a practice run.

I stood watching, and saw Darkstar go bucketing across a fan of scree, lollop down the brink of a gully, leap an intake wall far beneath and finish up in the home field at the back of Stonebank, where the waiting toy figure could have been none other than John Lingward.

The incident deepened a puzzle that we Iredale folk had been juggling with for some time. Quiet, frail, and over seventy, Lingward ran one of those tiny, one-man farms that provide no more than a bare living. A couple of years back he had bought a trail-hound pup. We had never thought of him as the type to go in for trailing.

After all, it costs money these days, the feeding, and the transport of the dog to the various trails around the country. True, Darkstar had won two or three events in the puppy-trail class. But somehow Lingward seemed the last man on earth to be taking an active part in a sport that, like many others, has its shady side.

As a whole, trailing is clean and carefully controlled by its ruling association. But it is true that there are odd men here and there who know all the tricks of the trade and do their sly utmost to employ them. On a trail of ten miles or so, winding over wild country, there are opportunities. Hounds have been changed, a fresh one put down to complete the last leg of the circuit. Sometimes a favourite has been nobbled by the simple process of somebody crouching in a secret hollow and chucking out a lump of meat as the leading hound is racing towards victory.

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES WOOD

That afternoon I happened to pass Stonebank. The old man was in the stackyard, splitting logs, his white hair flopping untidily, his thin arms looking too skinny to wield the axe.

I mentioned what I had seen that morning. He gave a brief, reticent nod, and was obviously unwilling to talk about it. Curiosity kept me persistent.

"Did you lay the trail?" I asked.

"Ay."

To do ten miles of rough, high-perched tramping early in the morning, dragging a scented sack, could have been no easy job for a man of his age.

He placed another log in position, thin end uppermost, and raised the axe. It came down properly under its own weight, allowing the blade time to cut, but it struck one edge, and merely sliced off a sliver.

I said laughingly: "You need specs," and the next second I could have bitten off my tongue. Something in the way he raised his eyes to me showed the truth. It was much more than a matter of ageing sight. Here was serious trouble. His mild, brown eyes had a hooded, peering stare.

He said: "I need summat more than specs. I need new eyes." He spoke the words simply

and without any self-pity, and presently he was telling me the facts. His sight had been failing him for a long while, and he had not bothered to do anything about it. Finally it had become so bad that he had consulted the local doctor, who sent him to a specialist in Carlisle. The specialist was frank. It was cataract trouble. Lingward would have to wait a few months before the operation, and things had gone so far, the specialist was doubtful of success.

It was hard to find the right words of sympathy. I caught myself wondering how he could possibly carry on the farm if he lost his sight. Married late in life, he had one child, Bobbie, who was only fourteen and still at school; it would be a few years before he could take over. Meanwhile, if the old man went blind, he could never afford a hired man.

Old John must have been reading my thoughts. "I've got to tide over next few years somehow," he said. "Likely 'twill mean a hired man. And that means money." He smiled, and turned his head towards a small door in the side of the barn. "That's why I bought yon Darkstar. One o' these days he's goin' to beat Slape."

"What!"

"Ay, he will an' all."

Though I felt infinitely sorry for him, I had an itch to laugh as well. Slape, owned by Harry Kell, of Gowderhall Farm, farther down the dale, had been champion trail-hound for two years. A splendid lemon and off-white dog, it had unusual speed, immense endurance, a great nose for scent, and a clever knack of conserving energy.

Unlike favourite racehorses, champion trail-hounds are consistent winners. A champion up against opposition only a shade below its own class will carry betting odds of seven to two on, and that indicates the poor chances of the rest of the field. The idea of Darkstar beating Slape this season struck me as well-nigh unthinkable. In a guarded fashion I tried to suggest to the old man that he was throwing his money away.

For answer he beckoned me towards the end of the barn, and opened the door. Darkstar emerged, sleek and friendly, the few white splashes on him startling against the black, silky coat. Compared with the workaday foxhound, he resembled a slender dandy, with such absence of belly as to make a man wonder where he carried the machinery of digestion.

Lingward fondled him and said: "I'll tell tha summat. I'm enterin' him for Holmforth trail. If Slape's runnin', bookies'll give ten to one on Darkstar, likely. I'm going to put on every pound I can raise."

It was almost shocking to hear the old man talk like this, risking his tiny capital on such a gamble. And yet he could scarcely be blamed, for he had no other way of raising money, and if blindness intervened and he could not afford a hired man, he would have to give up the farm. I left him feeling more depressed than ever.

A couple of days later, I was doing a bit of guttering near the edge of the road when a voice called over the wall: "How's fettle?"

It was Harry Kell, tall, red-faced, his blue eyes alight with a glint of swaggering fitness, his manner that of a man on top of the world. He had reason to be, with a big, prosperous farm, two thousand Swaledales, and a champion trail-hound.

On the lead, out for gentle exercise, he had that shapely champion, Slape, a streamlined creature of silk and muscle and sinew.

I leaned over the wall to tickle the dog's ear, and Kell said with a boisterous laugh: "Heard about old Lingward?"

"Heard what?" I said guardedly.

"Runnin' them private trails for Darkstar. Reckon the old chap's daft. He's scarcely got a penny to bless himself with."

"Might win money with Darkstar."

"Oo, ay, a bit. But he'll lose more than he wins. Don't I know the game?"

I was tempted to say: "Ay, and every dirty trick in it, though you don't have to use them with a champion like Slape." But there was no sense in getting on the wrong side of him.

I said: "He might have some luck."

"By gocks! He'll need it. There's no dog on earth can touch this." He patted Slape, and the assurance in that red face irritated me.

"No champion stays put for ever."

Kell said with heavy sarcasm: "Is he thinkin' Darkstar'll ever beat him?"

"Maybe."

"Then he's a fool, and I've nay time for fools." He made a snorting noise. "Anyways, only a fool would have stopped on at a tichy little farm like Stonebank."

"A bigger one wouldn't be much use to him now." There was no harm in mentioning the threat of blindness, and I told him.

He sucked a fat lower lip. "That'll be awkward for him. Ay. More's the reason why he shouldn't waste money on yon dog."

"If he wagered a packet and Darkstar beat Slape——"

Kell roared. "If cows was to milk theirselves. . . ."

"I feel sorry for him. He's in a bad hole. Don't forget he's seventy-two, and if he loses his sight, and can't afford a hired man——"

Kell slapped his thick hand on the top of the wall. "Poor old so-and-so. Brings tears to me eyes." He winked in the manner of his type, and walked off with buoyant self-assurance. I almost loathed him at that moment.

As the Holmforth Trail drew nearer and nearer, old John became more and more on edge in his quiet way, and as for his sight, I noticed the worsening of it in those few weeks. Myself, I was dreading the day, and the end of the race, and the end of everything for him.

It came at last, the early afternoon when we put on Darkstar's jacket and led him to my car, and I drove old Lingward and Bobbie the seven-odd miles to the Holmforth ground. The boy was home from school and could talk of nothing but the dog. A small show was being held at Holmforth, a tent full of spring flowers, and a tent of bread and cakes baked for a Women's Institute competition, and pens of Herdwick and Swaledale tups.

We tied Darkstar to one of the posts on the bank provided for trail-hounds, and walked about for a while. We could see the climbing mass of fell that provided the course for the middle portion of the trail. The first three miles and the last one were on the flat, across fields divided by sod-dykes and stone walls. The whole of that last mile could be viewed from the high corner of the field.

The bookies had set up their stands. Twenty minutes before the start of the trail they had chalked up the names of most of the runners. But no odds were given. They were waiting for Slape, entered but not yet arrived.

Old John stood very still, his hooded gaze on those boards. The high-pitched voices of the stewards bawled from a distance. Instantly the bookies were busy with their stumps of chalk. Slape had arrived, and the odds were being written up.

Old John, peering, said: "I can't see. What are they givin' Darkstar?"

"Tens," Bobbie said excitedly.

"Oo, ay." He walked slowly away from us, from bookie to bookie. Notes were coming out of his pocket. One or two of the bookies, I noticed, raised expressive brows.

A voice said contemptuously in my ear: "The old fool. Chuckin' it down the drain." It was Kell. He had a flower in his buttonhole, and a grin that made me ache to hit him.

The steward bawled again. We were wanted at the starting-line. I walked across and fetched Darkstar, as I had agreed to act as his slipper. Old John joined me, and we went over to the line. Some of the hounds were taking it easy. Some were trembling with excitement, jerking at the leash and howling. Darkstar thrust forward an eager muzzle. Otherwise he was fairly peaceful. A few yards to my right waited the calm Slape, held by Kell. That was unusual. At most trails the job was done by one of his farmhands.

Jackets were taken off the hounds. The yammering and yowling grew louder. In the far distance a figure was walking towards us—the trail layer completing the first half of the trail. Behind us, the noise of the crowd ebbed away to an expectant silence.

The trail layer appeared through the gateway, seventy yards off. He shut the gate and broke into a trot, and his hand jerked up and whisked the scented sack from the ground. Fourteen trail-hounds were off in a gliding flood, some yelping, some silent, flowing past him, leaping the gate and wall with the ease of panthers, streaming across the field beyond, lemon and off-white and tan and black, a loveliness of speed.

Within thirty seconds, Slape was leading distinctly. I could see Darkstar among a small bunch well to the front. Very soon they were out of sight. I took John by the arm.

"Come on. There'll be nothing doing for twenty minutes or more." Bobbie stayed behind to wait, but I steered his father around the flowers and the bread and cakes, and the pens of sheep, determined to distract him from himself. His face was calm enough. But inside him, anxiety must have been a seething sickness. He pretended to study the exhibits, though I doubt if he saw anything. He was waiting, waiting for the shout and the whistle that would proclaim the leading hound spotted by some peregrine eye.

It happened as we were dawdling by the pens. A throaty voice rose into a yell. The crowd surged across the field towards the finishing-line, stretching across the high corner. I squeezed John's elbow, and we went over, and already a name was being bawled triumphantly.

"Slape! Slape!"

Afraid to look at the old man, I stared across the fields. Kell stood close to me, alternately screaming his head off and blowing splitting trills on a whistle. An old shepherd topped the din with a new name. "Darkstar! Darkstar!"

The second dot was clear now, maybe fifty yards behind the first, and behind again were more dots, close together. I yelled Darkstar's name until my lungs ached, and tried to put encouragement into that row. But it was an empty, miserable business. Darkstar had no ghost of a chance.

Among the bedlam going on, I heard old John ask: "Is Darkstar far behind?"

"Fifty yards maybe. And there's about six hundred to go."

He became quite still. The hooded, peering stare was fixed. He tried to call Darkstar's name, and his throat stirred, and no sound came out of it. But Bobbie made up for him. For minutes the lad had not stopped yelling. "Come on, Darkstar!"

There was a curious ebbing of the noise, and almost silence for a second. The reason why was evident, though my unbelieving eyes could scarcely accept what they saw. Darkstar was closing the gap, slowly, slowly. He had not increased speed. He had been going all out, and no creature can do more. It meant that Slape, the unbeatable, had slackened. At four hundred yards the gap between the two was not more than twenty.

Bedlam burst out once more in terrific gusto. My throat tingled and hurt with frantic yelling.

"Darkstar! Darkstar!"

I put my mouth to the old man's ear. I bellowed: "Only ten yards between 'em now." Then I was screaming Darkstar's name again, and so were the crowd, half crazy with the excitement of watching the impossible taking place under their very noses.

At two hundred yards they were dead level. At a hundred, Darkstar had a lead of about a foot. I thought I was going to choke.

At fifty yards Darkstar had a clear lead, and came over the wall like a bird, and flung himself into a tearing, final burst through the screaming, yelling and roaring noise of his name. He was over the line, wriggling between my knees, and gobbling the few bits of rabbit I had been holding ready in a bowl.

As for his master, he had one caressing hand on the dog's head, and the other dabbing his eyes.

The impossible had come up trumps. Yet my brain refused to be a party to it. That almost imperceptible slowing down of Slape. . . .

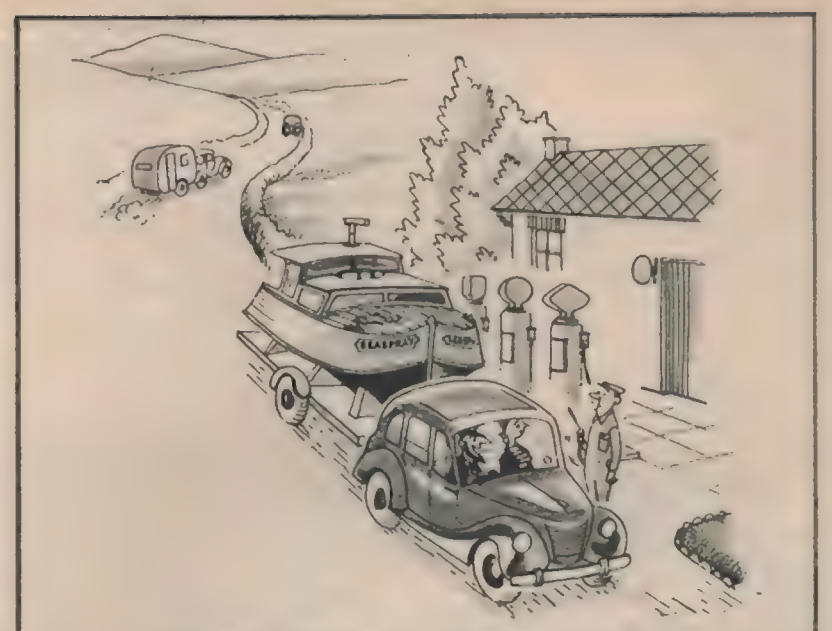
To the right of me, Kell was rubbing down his dog, an easy second, though long yards behind Darkstar.

"Near thing," he said, and I failed to grasp the implication at the moment. But I realized it very soon afterwards. While he stooped over his dog, almost covering the slender body, there was a brief gleam of metal between his fingers. I saw the edge of a safety-razor blade, and a severed bit of thread.

Staggered, I stared at him. Thread tied around a trailing-hound's toe is one of the dirty tricks of the game. As the hound goes lolloping over the strenuous course, the toe swells, and the thread bites deeper, until the pain of it gradually slows down the hound. A man only does it to his dog when he backs another and wants his own to lose. But in this case. . . .

Kell opened and closed one eye in a wink at me. I never knew whether or not he had bet on Darkstar. But if the recording angels did their duty, I reckon they should have given him top marks.

THE END



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DIGBY

Continued from page 22

bicycling home peacefully when this constable assaults me at this bridge. He knocks me off. I fall heavily. When I pick myself up he arrests me for a dozen offences I have not committed. It's absolutely outrageous, Mr. Consul. Then I look after this constable. I carry him myself on my own back to his house where he arrests me again and clicks on these handcuffs, if you please, and says I'm held for court tomorrow. It is a travesty of justice. I know my rights, Mr. Consul, and I demand those rights. As a law-abiding man I expect the law to abide by me even in this heathen country, or I will know the reason why and so will my Congressman. Can you hear me, Mr. Consul?"

"Take it easy, Mr. Ross. You didn't *hit* the policeman, did you?"

"I may have parried his blows in self-defence. More than that certainly not. I am all alone by myself in some severe trouble, Mr. Consul, without a friend except that Mrs. McIntoon the cop's wife has been kindness itself and I should be ungrateful if I did not pay due acknowledgment to a gracious lady. Thank you, Mrs. McIntoon."

You could almost see the sozzled playboy bowing at the end of the line.

"What charges are being preferred against you?"

"No lights is one. To that alone I plead guilty, due to a most unfortunate chain of circumstances, no fault of mine. Breach of said peace is two. Drunk and disorderly in charge of said vehicle is three. Assaulting said constable is four. I don't know how many more he is thinking up at this very moment. I, Digby P. Ross, demand your protection, Mr. Consul."

"Now, listen," said the consul. Every now and then his patience wore thin. This was one time. "Listen to me, Mr. Ross. First, you are entitled to the same protection as any other American citizen, neither more nor less. Second, it is my duty not only to serve the interests of Americans but also to serve the best interests of the United States. It is my opinion that you have been drinking. I am in no position to know the whys and wherefores of these charges you describe in such a garbled fashion. But I *am* in a position to respect the administration of the law in Scotland. Third, there is nothing I can do for you at this time of night even if I wanted to. It's not my job or my intention to help Americans make exhibitions of themselves." He was being rude, but you had to be rude to get it over to a guy in this condition. "Will you listen to my advice?"

Long silence. Finally: "I am ready to hear your advice." Pompous, dignified.

"Okay. Sleep it off, Mr. Ross, right where you are in the police-station and don't make any more trouble. If you want legal aid, call me in the morning. Lastly, bear in mind, if you can bear anything in mind, that you might get off easier if you decided to plead guilty. Now let me speak to the police constable again."

The consul found out the name of the place, hung up and went back to the sitting-room. They were still in Germany, but Carmen Graves stopped talking as he came in. "Lordy," she said, looking at her wrist watch. "Twenty minutes of four. You must think we're very rude, Mr. Carling, talking so much and staying so late. But we've hardly seen one another from those days to this. You know what it is."

"I could listen all night to you people talking." And then, because it was the kind of thing that would amuse them, he said: "You should have heard the phone conversation I just had. Some American guy in trouble up Crummock way. He socked a cop. Then he wondered why Mr. Digby P. Ross should be in jail for assault and being higher'n a kite."

"What did you say his name was?" Cy Becker asked, leaning forward.

"Digby P. Ross. He might have been President of the United States from the way he went on. Why? You don't know him, do you?"

"I know *a* Digby P. Ross. He was in my class at Harvard. A nice guy even if he is the perfect specimen of American manhood. President of the Ross Corporation these last five years. Did this one say where he came from?"

"New York City," said the consul. "But his accent certainly fits your label. Not ugly drunk—just very high, as I said. President of the Ross Corporation! My God, do you think this could be him? Why didn't he say?"

"He wouldn't," said Becker. "It's the sort of damn' silly thing he would or wouldn't say."

"The Ross Corporation is that big construction outfit, isn't it," Carmen asked.

"Big! With the subsidiary companies it's just about the biggest in America. You know what I think, my old she-shanty?" Which had been his sickening name for her late at night in the good jeep days. "What I think is we'd better check up on this Ross. If it is the same one—and I can hardly believe that's possible because the Digby I know is just about the soberest, most respectable stuffed-shirt in the world—then you and I might find something better to do with our expense accounts tomorrow, today. What say you to a pocket-sized scoop?"

"I say go call your night-desk."

Becker got his transatlantic call right away; it took them about one minute to find out. He came back.

"It's him," he said. "The very same. Flew over the other day. Come on, Carmen!"

* * *

Through the door Digby could hear the measured mumble of policemen, the protestations of offenders, the tramp and shuffle of feet, words now and then in a voice which had beguiled him through ecstatic hours, had sped him on his way, had, by rare anomaly, come here to judge him. Above and through them in hectoring mastery came the tones of Colonel Galbraith.

Digby's throbbing head was buried in his hands. Can it be me? he thought. Can it be I who kicked over my connubial traces and drank far, far too much, and socked a policeman?

He was unshaven. His hair was a mop. His shirt was grubby. He had hardly slept because first the ceiling and the barred windows heaved and swung; then if he shut his eyes, the flashing pink and purple darkness heaved and swung, and he had had to sit up on a hard pallet in the lock-up in Constable McIntoon's house to fight nauseating waves of vertigo. In the vague sozzled panoply of recollection, one thing stood out. This was the consul's advice: *You might get off easier if you decided to plead guilty.*

But it was not of his own fate that Digby thought. He reviled himself because, in his intransigence, he had forgotten the welfare of Fiona. If he contested the charges he would be cross-examined as to his prior movements. *You deny you were drunk. Where had you been, then? With whom had you been? What had you been doing?*

This realization had hit his aching head with the impact of a sledge-hammer. You miserable heel, he thought, repaying a glorious woman's kindness with betrayal. There and then he had resolved to plead guilty.

The consul had telephoned at ten Digby had refused legal aid. Mrs. McIntoon, a staunch, good woman, had renewed her offer to take the oath on his behalf against her husband. He had refused bail, and had been driven, still in the custody of McIntoon, by Lord Balgersho in his own closed Cadillac convertible, to the Court of the Justices of the Peace at the grey town of Crummock.

This day, begun in glory, had grown to be the blackest of his life. He had disgraced his name; he had let down his country; but, far worse, he had been within an ace of betraying a man's most sacred trust.

Digby groaned. Then he sat up straight. He was going to look them in the eye. He was going to show these people he could take it. Through the closed door he heard the colonel's truculent words of condemnation, bearing out Balgersho's remark as they drove along: *"I say, old boy, I don't want to depress you, but Galbraith's a tyrant on the Bench, a hanging judge if ever there was one."*

"Fetch him in!"

The door opened. A policeman beckoned. Digby stood up, squared his shoulders and walked into the crowded court-room towards a sea of red Scotch faces.

"No! No, man!" said the colonel harshly. "Not down there. You're no spectator. You are an accused person here to make acquaintance with

LIFE WITH MOTHER

At five I was already at boarding school, near Guildford, and I remember my mother coming to visit me one weekend. I was neatly dressed in my Sunday uniform, all black, with a cloche hat made of *crêpe de Chine*. Once outside the school gates, Mother grabbed the hat off my head and flung it out of the car window, exclaiming: "You can't stay in a place that makes you wear such ghastly things." I never went back to the school.

Mother was very impulsive. Most of her gestures, I recall, were sincere and generous and magnificently theatrical. After Guildford I was sent to Roedean. There I got chickenpox, and was segregated with eleven other girls in the school sanatorium.

Writing home, I mentioned that I would like some flowers and a doll. Back came an enormous parcel. It contained twelve dolls and twelve dozen daffodils, so that every girl with me should have the same as I had.

As Mother's own schooling had been brief, she could not resist identifying herself with me and my school friends. She took a delight in flouting authority.

Her spontaneous generosity was her most memorable quality. During the run of a play, everybody connected with it received a gift. For years she supported her father, grandmother, mother and step-father, not to mention other relatives.

But there was more to her generosity than just giving money, which she had always earned very easily. I remember when I first went on the stage we both caught nasty colds at the same time. She made me stay home, but went off to the theatre herself. When I remonstrated, she pointed out that she had no understudy, and that other people's jobs depended on her.

To me, as a child, she was the embodiment of all that was wonderful. No matter what she was doing, she always seemed glamorous, and I worshipped her. I have a vivid memory of her coming into the living-room in a pale blue chiffon *négligé*. I was so overcome I cried out, "Oh, Mummy, you're so beautiful!" and kissed the hem of the garment. She was embarrassed and angry.

When I reached my teens she and I were able to wear the same clothes. Although I borrowed her best dresses to wear when going out with my boy friends, I was annoyed once when I missed a pair of shorts and she had said nothing about borrowing them.

The mystery was solved when I went to see the opening of *Nymph Errant*. Out she danced wearing them, and I am afraid I never got them back.

When she died she left me all her clothes. Though it was three years ago, her perfume still clings to them, and I cannot open the wardrobe without thinking of her. I was terribly moved on going through her belongings to find that she had carefully kept every letter I had written her, even notes I used to leave on her pillow when she was late at the theatre.

What I regret most was that I saw so little of her, as she was always too busy to bring up a child entirely by herself. She had all the intense thirst for life of her generation.

Once, in Bermuda, we were told we simply must go under water in diving helmets to see the coral and tropical fish. I was scared stiff, but down she would go.

I followed. Later, I admitted how I had felt. She squeezed my hand. "I was petrified," she said. "But we couldn't miss anything exciting, could we?"

Her versatility seemed limitless. She could knit and sew beautifully, cook like a French chef, paint, write. Whatever she attempted, she did well, but this, I am afraid, made me conscious of a feeling of inferiority.

Our relationship was erratic. Sweet though she could be, there were moments when she could create a scene bigger and better than anyone I know.

I suppose I gave her cause, occasionally, but after a great blow-up, which ended in tears on both sides, I complained, "You're so nice to everyone, I don't know why you have to be so beastly to me."

"Well," she sighed, "if I can't let loose on my own family and have them understand, what am I to do?"

Who was the famous mother? For her name—and the complete photograph—turn to page 39

the law. Put the prisoner in the dock."

Digby was hustled into the dock. He could not resist looking once at Fiona. Today she wore a coat and skirt of her tartan, a plain white blouse, a green velvet beret—severely dressed for the judicial function. She was the loveliest lady magistrate in the whole wide world, studying a pencil in her hand. So cool and fresh and healthy after a good night's rest. She's twice the man I am, Digby thought sadly.

"Is this an American?" rapped the colonel. Three large sticking-plasters dotted his left cheek. He wore pince-nez low on his nose. He looked over them at Digby, coldly contemptuous.

"Yes, your Worship," said the Clerk of the Court, nervous, fussing with papers.

"Hurry up, then! Read the charges. We haven't got all day to waste on one miscreant."

But as the Clerk of the Court cleared his throat to begin, the door on the far side of the room opened and a man and woman burst in. It was so sudden, so dramatic, that every eye in court, including Digby's, turned to stare at the intruders.

WHOLLY at ease, they stood there, looking slowly right round the room, taking in the colonel, dwelling on Fiona, coming to rest on Digby. They were unmistakably Americans; their presence gave fleeting comfort and encouragement to him until he recognized the man, a classmate far away and long ago, a famous correspondent, a likeable four-flusher named Cy Becker. Digby's brains were working slowly, but it did not take him more than one hissing inhalation to realize the meaning of Becker's precipitate arrival.

"Hiya, Digby!" called Becker, waving his hand. "Sorry to see you in a spot."

"Order in the court!" thundered the colonel, standing up. "I will not tolerate communication with the accused. What is the meaning of this interruption, you, sir, and you, madam?"

Becker murmured to his companion. She was a sweet-looking, soft-featured *soignée* woman. She smiled and said in the hush: "My Lord, we apologize for breaking into the proceedings. We are American correspondents. This is Cyrus Becker and I am Carmen Graves. May we sit down in court, my Lord?" She had the kind of voice that lulls fretful babies.

It lulled the colonel. "Certainly," he said. "Pray do be seated. I accord you welcome to our public court. We have no secrets here, least of all from representatives of our great sister nation and staunch ally. Now proceed!"

The Clerk of the Court read. Digby had forgotten Constable McIntoon's extempore wording in the night; but hearing these charges now, he remembered. They were identical in substance—no lights, breach of the peace, drunk, assault.

"Are you guilty or not guilty on the first charge?"

"I plead guilty on all four counts, your Honour," Digby said loudly. He looked the colonel in the eye. No murmur must sully the reputation of that other Justice who sat so gravely by her senior on the Bench.

"H'mmmmm! You realize the import of a plea of guilty?"

"I do, your Honour."

"You realize that the Bench has no alternative in that case but to award just punishment?"

"I do, your Honour."

"Is there a statement by the police officer?"

This was produced, and McIntoon swore to its accuracy. He wore such an air of lugubrious smugness in the witness box that Digby felt a resurgence—sober now and perhaps more deadly—of the rage which had gripped him at the bridge. But he forced it down.

The colonel read the statement aloud. McIntoon stated on oath that Digby had wrested the baton from his hand and struck him with it.

"That isn't true," Digby expostulated. "I knocked him down with a perfectly fair punch on the jaw, and he hit his head on a stone. I never touched his baton."

The colonel rounded on him. "Silence! I will not have the proceedings of the court dominated by an accused person. Is there such a thing as a *fair* punch against a police officer in the execution of his duty? And I would remind you, Ross, that in this country, at least, there are no fancy shades of guilt or innocence. You plead the one, or you plead the other. Which is it?"

Digby swallowed. "Guilty," he said.

"The case is closed. Before the Bench decides on sentence, my colleague and I will have certain questions to put. Towards a citizen of our great ally we wish to display such leniency as is compatible with the maintenance of law and order in this peaceful community. Have you any explanation to offer for your conduct?"

"None, your Honour."

"Come, come, man! Do not act the dolt. Was there no ameliorating circumstance in your rake's progress? How did it happen that you were riding or trying to ride a bicycle in this deplorable condition at 2.30 a.m.? What had you been celebrating? Where had you been?"

He knows damn well where I'd been, Digby thought. What's the little swine trying to do? Aloud he said: "I have no statement to make, your Honours."

There was now an interruption from the back of the spectators' ranks. A short, square man was standing. He wore an expression both sheepish and extremely determined. "Currnel," he called.

The colonel thumped for silence. "Who is it? What is it?" he demanded, peering over his pince-nez, "oh it's you, Donny. Now look here, Donny Cleghorn, how many times am I to tell you people that when I sit here as a Justice on this Bench, I have no personal identity? I am not Colonel this or Colonel that, your neighbour. I am the instrument of the law, impartial, anonymous. I *am* the law." He glared all round the court, challenging anyone to contradict this noble affirmation. He was a lot of fat little men in one fat little man. "Well, what is it, Donny?"

"Your Worship, I was roused up by a clatter o' footsteps in the night and I rose from ma' bed and went outben. The accused was carrying the constable hame on his ane back just as easy as a bairn. The accused was na mair drunk than the currnel is at this minute. I never heard tell yet o' a drunk body able to carry anither body on his back."

"How dare you interrupt with testimony!" snarled the colonel. "You have not been called as witness. For once we do not invite your presence in this court, Cleghorn."

"I ken that fine, sir." The man looked mulish, mutinous. "But I ken justice too, or the lack. So I says to masel': I'll say my say whatever it costs me."

DONNY CLEGHORN sat down. There was a ripple of whispers in the court room, but that died when Digby said firmly:

"I was very drunk. There is no question of it. Thank you for your kind intention, sir." He bowed to the short man, sitting again now at the back. More throaty rumbles from the audience. They all hate me, he thought, every one of them except that guy, Cleghorn, who is perhaps an outcast, too.

Then he glanced at the front row where Cy Becker and the woman correspondent were seated one on either side of Balgersho, whispering to him and across him, and Balgersho wearing his most indolently diabolical expression. All three looked from Digby to the bench where Fiona twirled a thoughtful pencil. She was serene. She was the stable member of this Bench. I wonder if she remembers, Digby thought, or does she have the power of shutting herself, her own life, away completely when she becomes a magistrate? The correspondents

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were watching him with the lively interest of a pair of anatomy students dissecting a frog.

But the colonel was speaking. "The court ignores that interruption," he said, and turned to Fiona: "Have you any questions to ask the accused?"

She nodded with a lustre of auburn hair under the sleek green beret. "Just one," and looked at Digby across the gulf, the ocean, from Bench to dock. "Is it all right or is it frowned on, I mean, to hit policemen in America?"

Digby gulped. "It is frowned upon, Your Honour."

A distinct titter from the front row. The colonel smashed down his gavel. "Order in the court!"

He coughed and glared, a bald, moustached, egg-shaped, puce-faced little beast of a magistrate or hanging judge if ever there was one. "Before the Bench passes sentence, I feel it my duty to address certain observations to you, D. P. Ross, confessed miscreant. Let us consider your offences one by one. We need not dwell long upon the matter of riding a bicycle without lights. If, in less developed tracts and countries elsewhere, there may be a slackness, a casual disregard for road safety, such cannot be tolerated in our crowded island. Here we are many and we hold life dear.

"So much for that. Now, you have admitted, in accepting Constable McIntoon's statement, that you disturbed the peace, not only by shouting and singing, but also by the utterance of war cries such as *Fight, Fight, Fight*. It may be that this aggressive behaviour is customary in your homeland. It is certainly not the custom in our law-abiding community.

"Next, as to drunkenness. You admit intoxication. You have refused to tell the court how it was that you became drunk, whether you drank secretly sip by sip on your lurching cycle ride, whether you were led astray by publicans, or met with bad company at some low house. We do not know. We dare not surmise. We can say only that alcohol, which is the friend and enemy of man, is your enemy. Eschew it, Ross! Shun it at any rate for the remainder of your sojourn here in our temperate Highlands.

"And lastly the matter of assault, by far the most serious of your offences." The colonel paused to take a sip of water.

DIGBY stared at him. He could hardly believe it. Was the little monster really delivering this insulting homily? *Keep calm, remember Fiona!* he kept adjuring himself.

"You are here as the guest of Scotland, Ross. We, all of us, wherever you have been, have held out the hand of hospitality, the olive-branch of friendship. I feel sure that your fellow-Americans, whom we gladly welcome in this court today, will bear me out as to the warmth of Scotland's heart." He paused, and the correspondents, who were now leaning forward, pencils arrested in rapt attention, nodded their heads vigorously.

"In passing sentence, the court will take into consideration that you are a stranger to our way of life, that this is your first offence, that severity has never been Scotland's heritage."

He bent over to confer with Fiona. Apart from this whispering, there was a dead absolute hush in court. Digby struggled with himself. Red anger glowed. "*Control!*" he muttered. "*Control!*" But control was flying up high to the rafters.

"The accused will stand. . . . It is within our power to sentence you to fines totalling thirty pounds or four months' imprisonment, but, for the reason I have given, we do not intend to be harsh." The colonel paused and rapped it out: "Twenty pounds or three months."

"Oh! Ooohh! Aaahh!" long drawn-out from every corner of the court. One voice only: "It's a bluidy shame!"

"Order in the court! Who said that? Was it you, Cleghorn?" No answer.

Digby clenched the wooden railing

CLAIRES Dresses
PRICES SLASHED!!
SAVE
SAVE
SAVE

moment, but he knew that the backlog of remorse bided its time.

They were in sight of the plane, which stood in a small grass field.

They cleared the choked fuel-pipe. They flew in the afternoon.

• • •

A quarter of ten. I must get up soon, thought Madeleine Ross, in New York. But she stayed in bed, thinking.

You can't expect Craig to be like other people. You can't expect genius to be ordinary. Nature gives safety valves to the creative spirit. I must remember that; it expresses the truth so exactly.

Digby never had the faintest idea of what love was all about, the truth of it—the battle and the hatred of it, in Craig's words. He was just so considerate and polite and perfect always until I could have screamed. But, of course, that conventional perfection was the kind of man he is or was, and he could never be any different, not in a million years; so dull except for the last evening when he attacked me and said those awful things like *it's your only job*, and *you're a spoilt, selfish, stupid little woman.*

He was so horrible. I wonder how he is. I must read my letter again. Where did I put the rough copy? Here in my brown bag.

"*. . . Please understand that I am not bitter. I ask only that we come graciously to the parting of our ways.*"

That must have given Digby pause, if he ever got it. I suppose he got it. I wonder if it brought tears to his eyes for a moment, realizing what he had done to me. I'm going to pack up all my things today and tomorrow. Oh dear, so many things which are his things and my things. Then I will decide about Craig and Arizona.

The telephone. How nice to hear the phone ring.

"Madeleine!"

"Polly, darling!" What's wrong, I wonder? She sounds excited.

"Madeleine, have you seen it? About Digby. It's in the *Express*."

"What about Digby?"

"He's not hurt or anything. Darling, I hardly like to tell you, but they nearly sent him to prison for being drunk and attacking a policeman in Scotland. Madeleine, I do feel for you so much. It's Cyrus Becker's column on page seven, and something by Carmen Graves, too, on page thirty-one. Darling, this coming on top of everything, it can't help hardening the emotional block. I do feel for you so much. Shall I bring my copy round?"

She feels for me so much. She gloats for me so much. "No, thanks, Polly darling. I have a copy right here."

"I thought it was my duty to tell you, Madeleine. If I can do anything, honey, you only have to let me know. Goodbye now."

Where is it? Page seven. Cyrus Becker. I met him twice at the Class Reunion. I didn't like him. Oh!

"Wealthy Ross Corporation President Digby P. Ross. . . . Scottish vacation certainly took a lively turn early this morning. . . . Drunk and slugging a cop. . . ." *Good heavens! Digby could never do such things. It can't be him.*

"For reasons best known to himself and likely connected with local peach (some beauteous dish, Fiona Kilburnie—a magistrate, too) Ross determined to plead guilty on all counts, so punishment was coming to him.

"Presiding blimp magistrate spoke hearty welcome to this correspondent and friend, wartime colleague Carmen Graves; then revealed a staggering anti-American bias amounting to phobia in summing-up, made grossly insulting implications. . . .

"We give billions to these people, get nothing but abuse in return. We have learned not to expect gratitude, but it is reasonable to expect fair treatment for our citizens in British courts.

"Also indication of justice calibre: Chief Hangman Galbraith was Digby Ross's own host—one man presumed likely to be generous; one man, incidentally, debarred by interest from serving in any law court of any democracy we know. If this is British justice, let's keep our dollars for Americans. . . .

"Ross—always known hitherto as the politest of stuffed shirts—showed white-heat at travesty of justice. First shouted he would serve three months jail sentence. Later persuaded by above magisterial dish to pay £20 (fifty-six dollar) fine.

"All of which does not let Ross off the hook. This drink-sodden ambassador . . ."

And so on. Oh dear!

Turn to page thirty-one. Carmen Graves. A picture of Digby, haggard, dishevelled, but unmistakably Digby, with a woman, their faces close. Beautiful even in a wired picture.

"Fiona Kilburnie of the Birks, *intime* hostess to Digby P. Ross last night, his lovely if faintly embarrassed co-judge today, the 'bonniest lassie in all Scotland,' chief of her Clan, here gives a woman magistrate's advice to the stricken Ross, says: 'Pay fine, Digby darling, and share freedom's joys. . . . Physically a fiery Highland Hayworth and *femme fatale*, she is . . . etc., etc."

Oh, Digby, how could you do that to me, making me a laughing stock more than ever? But this woman! What's her name? Fiona Kilburnie. I can just see her catching you on the rebound and making you fighting drunk on purpose, and you the most different and attractive man the only night you ever were horrible to me. I could tear her eyes out. Why pretend any more? Why pretend I like Craig Proctor when in my heart of hearts I think he's a sex-ridden intellectual cry-baby? Poor Digby! I must save him from himself. I must get him back. What shall I do? I know what I'll do right now. . . .

"Transatlantic operator. Can I help you?"

"I want to make a person-to-person call to Scotland. . . . I'll spell it. . . . I'm afraid I don't know the number. And operator! Could you say that Mrs. Digby P. Ross wants to make the call at a time when she can speak privately with Colonel Galbraith. This is very important—speak privately with him. Can you do that? Oh, thank you. You'll call me?"

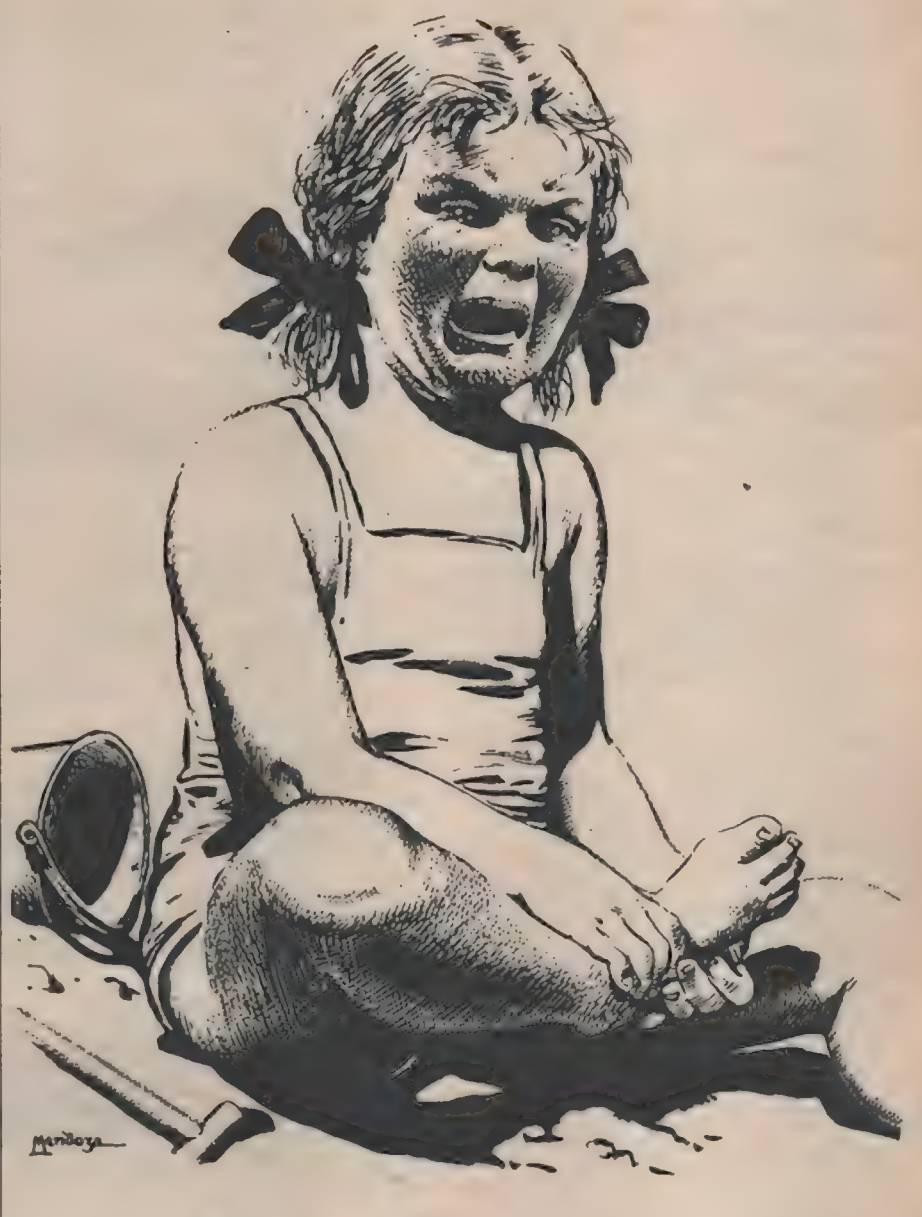
"Is this Mrs. Digby P. Ross? . . . On your call with Colonel Galbraith in Scotland. Four p.m. our time will be

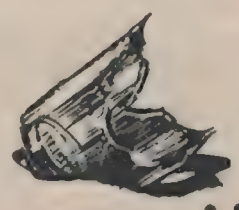
AGAIN—THREE COMPLETE STORIES IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

A JOB FOR THE DEVIL
by STUART CLOETE

THE GALLANT PROFESSOR
by BARRY PEROWNE

BOY WITH A GUN
by F. W. HOLIDAY





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Waterproof gives protection from suds, dirty water, grease and oil

Fabric gives normal everyday protection for your cuts and grazes

suitable, Mrs. Ross. . . . Yes, he said entirely private. . . ."

"Farquhar Galbraith here."

"I'm Madeleine Ross, Colonel Galbraith—Digby's wife. He isn't near you, is he?"

"No, no, dear lady. He left a few hours ago to dine with my niece, Fiona."

A few hours ago! "Oh, Colonel Galbraith, I've been so worried about him since I read the press accounts this morning. How does he seem?"

"I can assure you, Mrs. Ross, that this unhappy affair has been gravely disturbing to me. Your husband is well, perhaps a little subdued and quiet in the house, but wonderfully well. I feel most upset that my task should have been to punish him, deeply upset, but the call of duty is inexorable. Yes, he seems in splendid health physically, and I think I can say that the burden of his remorse is easing. He fished today; he flew, I believe, yesterday after the trial; tomorrow I take him to shoot grouse with my niece, a charming girl. Physical interests are the best therapy, I believe. We're all devoted to him, you know. . . ."

"Three minutes."

"Colonel, I wonder if you could advise me. Is there a hotel anywhere not too far away? I do feel I should be near him. . . ."

"A hotel, dear lady? There are none within twenty miles. But I wouldn't dream of letting you stay at a hotel. Our Scottish tradition of hospitality would never allow me. It is unthinkable. And besides, it would be the greatest pleasure in the world to welcome you to this tumbledown old house. We rough it, of course. Simple fare, an outdoor life. It is little to offer someone so used to the graces of the American home. But do come, Mrs. Ross. Do, I implore you!"

How kind and understanding he sounds, not at all anti-American. These columnists! I can't say no. "Thank you, Colonel Galbraith. Why, thank you so much. You're far too kind. I *could* reach Prestwick the day after tomorrow. Do you think it would be wiser to say nothing to Digby?"

"A capital idea. I heartily agree. Keep it as a joyful surprise for the dear fellow. Give him no hint, no clue. Ah, how wonderful you American women are, as I was saying to Digby P. a few days ago. So thoughtful and charming."

"*Six minutes.*"

"What would be my best way from Prestwick? Should I hire a car, or come by train, or is there an air service?"

"Were I not so decrepit, my dear Mrs. Ross, I would come down myself to meet you. But I fear *anno domini* makes that impossible. Let me see now . . . I have it! I have it! There is a perfectly splendid young feller, a neighbour of mine, Lord Balgersho. I can ask him to fly down for you, and the heavy luggage could come by train. Hamish Balgersho is a delightful chap—I'm sure you will get on like a house on fire."

"That sounds perfect, if it isn't putting him to too much trouble."

"Gracious, no! He is the most selfless of people. Thinks only of others. What time are you due at Prestwick?"

"Around noon, I think."

"Noon it shall be, the day after tomorrow. This is indeed a happy prospect for me, Mrs. Ross."

"Thank you so much, Colonel Galbraith. *Au revoir*, then."

"Salaam, dear lady. God speed!"

* * *

It couldn't be this one, could it? Not this one with the swinging kilt and the black head and the hellfire sort of look? He's caught my eye. He's smiling. What a heavenly man! Oh, my goodness gracious!

"You're Mrs. Ross, aren't you? My name's Hamish Balgersho."

"I'm Madeleine Ross. How d'you do? How did you guess?"

"I guessed. Can you stand the thought of more flying?"

"Oh yes. I'm not a bit tired. It's terribly kind of you to meet me."

Balgersho smiled. "But no," he said. "Not the least little bit. An enormous pleasure. Mrs. Ross. This way."

To be continued next week

THE BLACK PARACHUTE

Continued from page 15

landing lights cutting into the darkness like two shining knives.

Less than five minutes later, it took off again with Peter, Anne-Marie and Schmidt, and a quantity of equipment aboard, while Bates set to work to remove all evidence of the airfield having been used.

In the DC-3's cargo compartment, once the plane had reached cruising height and settled down to drone steadily across the moonlit face of England, Peter busied himself with a parachute and harness, adjusting the webbing straps so that they would fit the German's lanky body.

Schmidt watched him, seemingly interested in the design of the equipment, and presently, with an almost brutal abruptness, asked: "What is the meaning of the black mark upon the parachute pack?"

Peter blinked, then answered easily: "Oh, that! It means it's got a black canopy, that's all."

"Which Mrs. Parker's has not?"

"No, I couldn't lay my hands on two black ones," Peter explained. "Hers is the usual camouflage colour. You being number one in this business, I thought you'd like the black job—harder to see against the night sky, you know."

He gave a second set to Anne-Marie. She looked it over critically, and he chuckled. "It's all right, my pet. They're not made of reconstituted cami-knickers, if that's what's worrying you. They're brand, spanking new, unused Service 'chutes—very hard to come by, believe me."

Anne-Marie hesitated; then rewarded him for his efficiency with a brief smile, half-burying the hatchet. Peter grinned at her.

The plane skirted London, flying in an easterly direction until it was over the Thames estuary, then turned its nose towards Paris. In the cargo compartment, because of the height at which they were flying and because the door had been removed, it was exceedingly cold. Anne-Marie and Schmidt, tightly buckled into harnesses, were half-lying, half-sitting on opposite sides of the fuselage, using their parachute packs as pillows. Beside Anne-Marie and directly opposite the German, Peter, having no parachute, had made himself a nest of blankets.

The noise of the motors made conversation a strain and, at the same time, their rhythmical throb had a hypnotic effect. First Anne-Marie and then Peter nodded, yawned and fell asleep. Schmidt did not.

For some fifteen minutes after the others slept, the German remained motionless, staring into space. Then, as if he had come to a decision, he reached for his bulky briefcase. Turning his body so that neither of the others could see what he was doing, should they happen to wake up, he took from the case a hypodermic syringe and a rubber-topped pharmaceutical bottle. He thrust the needle of the syringe through the rubber and drew off a carefully measured quantity of liquid. Presently, satisfied that the syringe was properly loaded, he laid it in his lap and took a gun from a shoulder holster.

Schmidt then crawled across the fuselage with the gun in one hand and the syringe in the other. The noise of the engines drowned any slight noise he might have made. Neither Anne-Marie nor Peter stirred.

With a precise and carefully calculated effort, the German swung the butt of his gun downwards and sideways so that it thudded against the back of Peter Macready's head. The sleeping man grunted and went limp.

Schmidt forced Peter's sleeve up above the elbow of his right arm, found the big vein in the crook of the arm, and thrust in his needle with the confidence of complete familiarity. Then he waited, glancing at his watch from time to time. Peter Macready stirred. Schmidt slapped his face viciously. Peter opened his eyes.

"Sit up!" Schmidt said in a tone of harsh command. Peter sat up. "I am going to ask you some questions. You will answer truthfully?"

"Yes."

The sound of their voices awakened Anne-Marie. She opened her eyes to see Schmidt standing over Peter in a stooping position forced upon him by the curve of the fuselage. With his body made bulky by the heavy clothes he was wearing and with the parachute pack on his back, it seemed as if the German were hunchbacked. She blinked, suppressing a shudder, because his appearance was infinitely sinister. She did not move.

Schmidt spoke again in a cold, clear voice. "Were you telling me the whole truth, Macready, when you said that my parachute was marked in order to show that it was the one with the black canopy?"

Peter, staring directly ahead with a somnambulist's intensity, answered in a flat voice, "No."

"Why was the parachute marked?"

"To show that it was the one which wouldn't open."

Anne-Marie stared, her eyes wide with amazement. She licked her lips with a dry tongue, and waited.

"What is wrong with it?" Schmidt demanded.

"A piece of cord fastens the static line to the top of the canopy inside the pack," Peter answered. "It's designed to break, but only after the canopy has been dragged from the pack. I undid the knot and re-tied it in a slip knot. If you jump with it, it will pull away without causing the parachute to open."

Anne-Marie opened her mouth to cry out, but no sound came.

"Why did you wish to kill me, Macready?"

"Because of what you know about me."

"I have held that knowledge for ten years," the German commented. "I have never revealed it. Why should you wish to kill me now?"

"It seemed a good opportunity," Peter Macready answered without emotion. "Until a few days ago I thought the Allied authorities had caught and hanged you. I knew you had been sentenced as a war criminal."

There was a silence, broken eventually when Anne-Marie found a pitiful part of her voice and whispered, "Oh, my God!" just sufficiently loudly to be heard above the engine noise.

Schmidt swung round, glaring, and she saw the gun in his hand. He smiled suddenly and said in a soft, gentle voice: "I am sorry. I did not intend you to hear. You will now please keep silent and remain where you are."

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going to punish him," Schmidt said quietly. He turned to face Peter again. "Macready!"

"Yes, Colonel Meissner?"

"You will call me Schmidt! Stand up!"

Peter Macready rose to his feet, his hands hanging limply at his sides. "There is a parachute with its harness lying at your feet," Schmidt said in a slow, clear voice. "Pick it up." Peter stooped, his hands groping uncertainly. "By your right hand," Schmidt prompted. "Can you feel it?"

"Yes." Peter's hand closed as if it were gripping something, but it was not.

"Put it on."

Anne-Marie had closed her eyes. Now she opened them again to see Peter Macready perform a painstakingly accurate and pitiful mime, as he levered himself into a webbing harness which did not exist. His face was quite expressionless, and it was apparent that his mind, drugged and dominated by Schmidt's hypnotic control, completely accepted the existence of a parachute harness. He made the movements of a parachutist satisfying himself that all was secure, hitching at imaginary shoulder straps to feel the tension and glancing down at his chest to check the position of the knurled plate of an imaginary quick-release mechanism.

The gun in the German's hand moved to cover Anne-Marie. Without taking his eyes off her, he shouted at Peter Macready. "Go to the door!" Peter shuffled towards the gaping hole in the plane's side. "Now hook up your static line!" Peter groped for something on a level with his knees, seemed to find it, and went through the motions of attaching a hook to a ring-bolt set beside the door.

"Are you quite ready to jump?" Schmidt demanded.

For the first time there was a vestigial hesitation in Peter's reply. "Ye-es . . . I don't want to. Must I?"

"You must!" Schmidt turned to face the man at the plane's door and shouted at the top of his voice. "Jump, Macready! *Jump now!*"

The words were irresistibly compulsive. Anne-Marie leaped to her feet, screaming, "*Attention! Attention, Pierrot! Ne bouges pas!*"

But Peter Macready jumped.

The motors throbbed. The wind screamed past the hole in the plane's side. Anne-Marie had her hands before her eyes. After a long minute, while she bit her lips, fighting down hysteria and a desire to vomit, they dropped to hang limply at her sides.

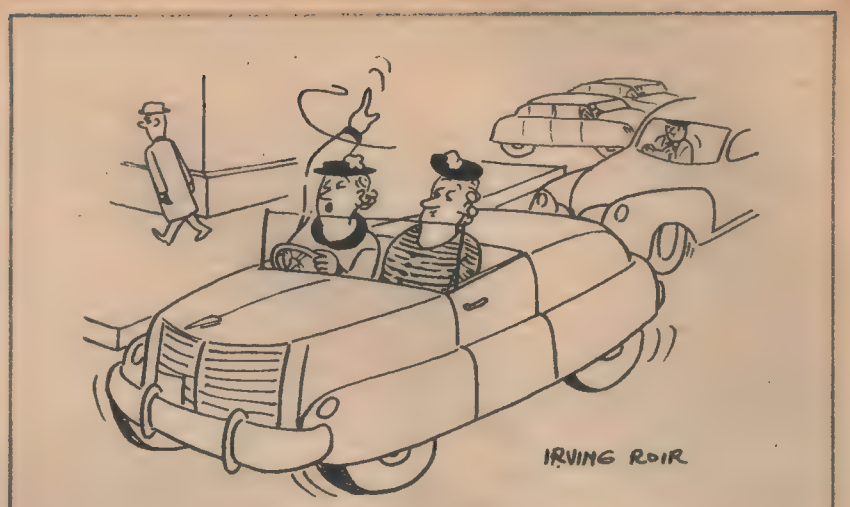
"I regret I had to do that," Schmidt said quietly. But he was smiling. "An interesting experiment with a drug called scopolamine. I was not at all sure that it would succeed."

Words of loathing and revilement hovered on Anne-Marie's tongue, but she suppressed them. She must try to think clearly. "Peter called you Meissner. Are you the Colonel Meissner who was the co-ordinating officer in charge of relating the activities of the *Sicherheitsdienst* and the *Gestapo* in occupied France?"

Schmidt waited for a moment, shrugged and said, "Yes."

"What hold did you have over Peter Macready?"

"He was a double agent," Schmidt



"I give them the kind of signal they expect from a woman driver. It makes them really cautious and I never have any accidents"

answered, "working for us and you at the same time."

The girl held her breath, remembering how she had boasted to this man of the mutual trust between Macready and herself.

The memory brought another to mind. "That story you told me—about the hidden documents," she said. "Was it all a lie?"

The German smiled and shook his head.

"I never lie unless it is necessary. I told you the whole truth, but with one small deviation. I am a Nazi, as I always have been. I wish to find those documents in order to destroy them. Very soon now the Nazi party will rise again. We do not wish to have documents which might be misinterpreted within possible reach of our enemies."

ANNE-MARIE nodded, seeing the simplicity of the pattern of deceit which Schmidt had woven with Peter's assistance. There remained only one thing to say, so she said it, her voice husky with hatred. "What are you going to do with me?"

"Nothing that has not already been planned, my dear," Schmidt answered. "We shall jump together, in case you should be tempted to run away—and then you shall take me to the Italian-Swiss border." He struck the quick-release mechanism of his parachute harness. "Did you hear Macready explain what was wrong with this contraption?"

"Yes."

"Can it be repaired?"

Anne-Marie shrugged. "I don't know."

Schmidt's blue eyes gleamed. "For your sake I hope so," he said, "since you will be jumping with it. Kindly take off your parachute."

Slowly, Anne-Marie did so. Schmidt handed her the pack with the black cross marked on the canvas. She undid the ties securing it. Her fingers were cold and clumsy. Schmidt watched her for a while in silence, then said, "By the way, you do not have to take the death of Macready very hard."

"Why not?"

"You were married, were you not, to a British agent called Max Parker who was taken in 1944 and died in Ravensbrueck?"

The girl nodded. "Yes."

"He was taken because Macready denounced him," Schmidt said quietly.

Anne-Marie's eyes widened and she stared at the German in utter silence. Her lips moved, soundlessly forming the word, "Max!" She shut her eyes. Hatred was alive in her, sitting like a malevolent idol in the pit of her stomach, but it was directed solely at the man standing over her. For Peter Macready she could feel only contempt and a deep, aching pity. "Poor Peter," she said aloud, and Schmidt frowned with astonishment.

Anne-Marie bent her head over her task. She found the faulty knot and retied it. As she did so, tears ran down her cheeks to fall between folds of shining black nylon.

Half an hour later, when the co-pilot came aft to warn his passengers that

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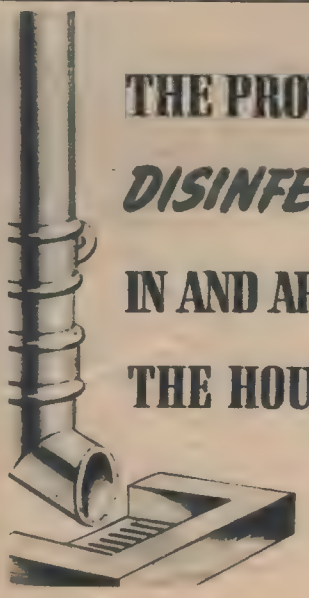

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the plane was circling over the pre-arranged dropping point, he found the cargo compartment empty.

Schmidt jumped—inexpertly and far too strongly — carrying Anne-Marie enfolded in his arms. The great wind of the slipstream hit them. There was no sensation of falling, only that of being buffeted by a gale. The sharp, thwacking noise of a parachute opening sounded once, then again. Anne-Marie glanced upwards and, with difficulty, identified the bulbous outlines of their canopies against the night sky. She let her breath out, slowly.

Now everything was very, very still. The noise of the plane had receded until it hardly bothered the ears.

Anne-Marie looked down. The ground was already close. Schmidt's great weight had probably made them fall faster than usual. "You'd better let me go," she shouted. "There are trees below us. I can probably avoid them by myself. If we carry on as we are we might get hung up so badly that we'd have to wait for the police to cut us down."

Schmidt looked into her face. At a range of inches she could feel the warmth of his breath. She saw suspicion glint in his eyes, then disappear. He nodded and, a moment later, released her. They swung apart, like swingboats at a fair going in opposite directions. Anne-Marie reached up to take hold of the two forward risers

above her head and pulled them down to chest level, spilling air out of her canopy. Her oscillations stopped and she skated through the air in a forward direction instead of dropping directly downwards. Trees swept beneath her, so near that the branches almost touched her feet. A few seconds later, she hit the ground with a jarring impact which drove the breath out of her body. Pain seared through her right leg. A darkness far deeper than that of the night overwhelmed her. She lay motionless where she had fallen, hard up against a low stone wall.

When she regained consciousness, Anne-Marie tried to move, but the pain in her leg leaped into life with such unbearable ferocity that she knew it was useless. She lay still and waited. Some time later she heard voices and saw lights flashing among the tall trees behind her. She shouted with the strength of despair, and a shout came in answer. Presently the light of a torch shone in her face. She saw that the man who held the torch was dressed in the blue uniform of the French *Gardes Mobiles*.

Anne-Marie swallowed. "Take care," she said urgently in French. "A man parachuted with me. He is a dangerous German war criminal called Meissner. He was condemned to death at Nuremburg, and if you try to arrest him he'll kill you. He has a pistol."

"*Soyez tranquille, mademoiselle,*" the policeman said gently. "The man who jumped with you is dead. If he was condemned to death at Nuremburg, then it is truly ironical that he should have hanged himself upon the branches of a French poplar tree. A line of the parachute rigging encircled his neck and killed him instantly. Now, tell me where you are hurt. I have sent for an ambulance. It will soon be here."

The girl shut her eyes. The smell of the French countryside, subtly different from that of the English, touched her nostrils. She breathed deeply, thankful to be alive. THE END

A BOXER IN THE FAMILY

Continued from page 11

moment she hardly knew what was happening, and the bells were ringing in her ears.

Later, walking back to the camp, he told her, "I've been falling in love with you—deeper and deeper every day. I've known it and maybe I haven't been too romantic about it, but I've had this damn' fight on my mind."

"You haven't any doubts about it, have you—the fight I mean?"

"Of course I have," he said. "Four nights from now, in front of thousands of people, I'll be in a ring with a young bull called Babyface Grimes. He's fast, he's strong, he has a chin of concrete, and a right hand full of murder. I'm getting on, I'm not as fast as I used to be, and I've got to train really hard to make the weight. Yes, I've got plenty of doubts."

"I've always thought winning had something to do with a frame of mind," she said.

He laughed. "Look," he said. "This is not school cricket, hurrah for our side and all that. It's my last fight, win, lose or draw. I'm finished. I'd like to win it because I'd like to throw in my hand while I'm still the champion. I'm very human, but even so the law of averages always rears its ugly head—and so I have my doubts."

"But how can you give your best with a mind like that?"

"I'll try," he said, and she saw the white flash of his teeth in the darkness as he grinned.

She stopped walking and turned to face him. "Darling," she said, "you can't lose."

"I can," he said. "Quite easily."

"It's not right to feel that way." Inexplicably, she found herself thinking of Gerry, Gerry who was prepared to compromise on anything. Gerry the old woman. But not Dave Reegan, she thought. Oh no, he mustn't feel like that.

She was silent as they walked back, and left early.

It was time to break camp. The fight was only two nights away. "I'm going to give him a day off. He can laze around the hotel for a day. Maybe go to a show," Jimmy Perry said to Helen. "He's irritable as hell, always the same way around this time. You coming up with us?"

"I don't think I want to see the fight, Jimmy," she said.

The little man looked at her with all the understanding in the world in his eyes. "You've really fallen for him, haven't you?" he asked her.

"I don't know."

"You don't?" He smiled. "Come and see the fight. Maybe it'll help you make up your mind."

"Will he win, Jimmy?"

The manager wrinkled his nose. "That's not a question you ought to ask. The Count was telling me about that frame of mind stuff you were on about the other night. . . . You know, I've been around a long time. I know a little about men, maybe about women, too. I don't know what kind of experience you've had with men before, but come up and see this fight. It's possible he may lose, but even if he does he'll still be champ. Come up and see what I mean."

Before Helen left to drive up for the fight, Nanny voiced the same sentiment. "I don't see the sense of two grown men hitting each other, but I do know one thing. Mr. Reegan is much the nicer character. The other one looks a ruffian." She was not a great boxing fan.

Sixty thousand people were behind Helen. Sixty thousand restless, expectant people sitting in a dimmed arena watching a deserted ring. The preliminaries over, the big one coming up. The ring itself fascinated her. An elevated island in the surrounding darkness, the arc lights above it accentuating its importance. Soon all these people will be cheering him, she thought. She shivered.

The referee came up into the ring. He moved around the four sides, testing the ropes, testing the posts. While he was doing it the crowd roared. It was a mighty, frightening roar. The people around her stood up, and she did so, too. A woman in the next seat said to the man with her, "Who is it?" and he said, "Babyface—he's coming now."

"Babyface" Grimes and his seconds came down the aisle and up the steps through the ropes to the ring. He was grinning and waving his cupped hands above his head. He flat-footed a few steps into the centre of the ring, and then he went to his corner.

He's so young, Helen Merton thought. He's so young and big. "A young bull with murder in his right hand," Dave had said. . . .

And then the crowd roared again. This time the note of it was even greater than before. "Count! Count!"

Reegan looked over at Helen as he passed. He grinned and waved. Jimmy Perry waved, too, and then they were up in the ring and the roar was a tremendous, ear-dinning ovation now.

Jimmy had the Count in his own corner and she could see the little man talking and motioning over to Babyface.

The M.C. stepped to the centre, raised his hand, and through the loudspeakers his voice had an extra flourish as he introduced the Count.

"In this corner, ladies and gentlemen, wearing white trunks, one of the greatest of our time, or all time, the ever-popular light-heavyweight champion of the world—Dave 'the Count' Reegan."

Again the crowd roared, and then the Count, Jimmy Perry, Babyface, and a tall, thin, tired-looking man were all in a huddle with the referee. And then there were just the Count, the young bull and the referee in the floodlit square. The two boxers stood in their corners, facing out into the darkness. She heard the bell.

For five rounds Reegan was a beautiful thing to watch. He boxed superbly, he bothered Babyface with left jabs, tied him up in the clinches, hooked and crossed all over the ring. In the fifth he dropped Babyface for a count of nine.

Helen was on her feet, yelling with the other 60,000. Then Babyface was back on his feet, still coming in, flat-footed, to meet the Count, and he was still strong. . . .

In his corner at the end of the round, the Count slumped on his stool while his seconds worked on him. "I gave him everything that time," he said to his manager. "And he's still coming."

"I know," Jimmy said. "The legs—how are they?"

"They're going. I'll have to get him soon."

The Count was not so fast in the sixth and Jimmy knew that from now on he would be fighting with his head. Thirteen years of winning, the long way up, and such a short way down.

The seventh and eighth were Babyface's. He was catching up, connecting more frequently. Every time one landed, Helen Merton, down at the ringside, bit her lips and said, "No, Dave—no!" She was saying it aloud, but no one except the woman next to her could hear the words in the din.

When he came in from the tenth round, the Count did all the talking. "Jimmy," he said, "I'm going after him. I can't make the distance, we both know that. His right hand is dynamite, but my own is not too bad, either. I'm going to mix it."

"Wait a minute," Jimmy said. "Don't get your head knocked off in your last fight."

"We'll see," the Count said.

Reegan came out for the eleventh just as flat-footed as Babyface. They both moved in and slammed each other. The lid was off. It was a straight slugging match from there. The champ changed from jabs to hooks. Left hooks and right crosses. He went for Babyface's body, and then moved up to his jaw. All the time he managed to stay away from the murderous right. The young man was stronger in the clinches. He roughed up the Count at the break, and always there was that right, looking for the knockout punch.

Helen Merton was on her feet with the rest, hoarse with yelling. This was not the Count she had known. This was a new, savage killer of a man. He was fighting for something that he valued and wanted to keep. Babyface came back just as savagely—for something he wanted to get.

Both of them were labouring, and both of them were cut up, Babyface as much as the champ. Finally it happened. In the thirteenth, Babyface connected solidly with the right. The Count just stood there, his knees buckling, trying by instinct alone, and then again the right came through. The champ was down.

The referee started the count and Reegan twitched there on the canvas, trying to get back. At seven he was on both knees, at eight on one, and at ten he was up but moving in the opposite direction away from Babyface. He moved with his hands up, looking for someone to fight.

Helen Merton, her heart almost torn from her body, felt a pride she had never known.

The referee stopped it. He raised Babyface's arm. The young bull did a strange thing then. He broke away from the ref, ran over to the other corner and raised Reegan's right arm, hugging him like a long-lost brother.

Jimmy Perry, blinking back the tears, started to walk back up the aisle with the Count. Helen shoved her way through the crowd to the aisle and stood waiting to meet them.

The Count tried to smile through his puffy face. "Well," he said, "I told you I could lose."

She took his face gently in her hands. "You didn't," she said fiercely, and kissed him. "You didn't. You couldn't." She hardly knew what she was saying in the tremendous din and the confusion of her own thoughts.

"Come to the dressing-room and tell me," he said, and he could still make it sound like a joke.

Helen Merton followed the ex-champion of the world, the champion of her heart. THE END

JOURNEY INTO BRITAIN

Continued from page 19

gets in a week. Take Len in there. Some time back he was busy with carving a table for King Farouk—we've done quite a bit for him. He'd be getting, say, around £9 a week. Five years' apprentice, remember, and another five to learn the job properly. Well, he had a pal, a milkman, who went to one of the mass-production firms, on a machine. Within six weeks, that chap was getting £14 a week."

In his office over the road, the boss, Alderman Ralph Janes, had similar ideas. "This contemporary stuff," he growled, "makes me mad." He was eighty years old, had captained the High Wycombe cricket team for twenty years, and been apprenticed to chairmaking with his father and grandfather at the age of twelve.

Machine Shop In Chapel

But the customer is always right, and there is no future for Canutes in British industry today, even in High Wycombe. And so, in the old chapel that had been built to John Wesley's own plans, the firm had installed a modern machine shop, and a gradual switch to high-grade machine production was being planned. For, by 1953, the facts of the matter were clear: one-tenth of High Wycombe's furniture firms—those that had gone in most wholeheartedly for planned mass-production—were doing nine-tenths of the business.

For all that, the march of progress has been unusually forbearing. In the villages, scattered for eight or nine miles along the valley, the little man could still find his niche. The mass-producing giants were beginning to dominate the scene in High Wycombe itself; but in the village of Stokenchurch, for instance, eight miles along the Oxford road, the modest family undertakings still came into their own. And Stokenchurch still asserts that it makes nearly all the church chairs in England.

I stopped in the main street to ask the way of a grey-haired woman who was arranging small pieces of white wood in neat stacks beside the garden path in front of a semi-detached house. This was Mrs. Poole, and the pieces of wood she was stacking to dry in the garden were chairbacks her husband, Harry Poole, had shaped in his little place at the back of the house. There are many other little piles of chair parts, stacked for seasoning, down the sides of houses, in gardens and garages all over the district—evidence of the persistence in this regimented century of the Englishman's passion for being his own master.

Mrs. Poole directed me across the road to a timber yard down at the back of a house, where I found in charge of the proceedings a fresh-faced young fellow who still had about him, I thought, something of the genial nonchalance of the wartime R.A.F. His name was T. R. Gillett, and he told me how he had taken over the family business after the war. His grandfather had made entire chairs; now he and his eight employees confined themselves to buying trees and part-processing them to serve as raw material for the bigger manufacturers.

Timber-feller At Work

Saws were tearing through beech planks, cutting them into billets for legs, the elm into squares for chair seats. Behind, a giant of a man was attacking an enormous beech trunk that had just been brought in, stripping off the bark. From the mass-producer's point of view, the timber in the Chilterns was getting too nearly exhausted to worry about; but the small timber merchant, who knew his way about the local estates, could still make a go of it. John Dilley, timber-feller—one-half of a two-man outfit—was still kept pretty busy.

Across the road again, the white-aproned workers of C. R. Bates and Sons, Chairmakers, leaned against their gateway, enjoying their tea-break, a traditional chairmaking institution, it seems. Young Mr. Bates, too, follows in grandfather's footsteps. But in grandfather's days Stokenchurch's chairs were loaded each week on to farm carts and hawked, sometimes by the proprietor, up and down the country. (It wasn't unknown for the workers to have to wait for their pay till the boss got back with the takings.) Now, with the third generation, Bates stands at the halfway house of mechanization. Power-driven hammers and screwdrivers whirr in the assembly shop. A power adze, a formidable machine, shapes and hollows the elm seats of the traditional Windsor chair.

Stokenchurch still claims to be the true home of the real Windsor, on which the fame of the region was founded, still adheres to the classic formula: beech for the legs and stretchers, ash, a bending timber, for the curving back, and elm, with its "wild grain," for the seat.

Though the Windsor chair has been called Britain's only truly native style, oddly enough no one knows how it got its name. One story attributes it to "Farmer" George III himself, who is supposed to have settled so comfortably into one that he forthwith decided that it should be called the "Windsor." And, looking at the rotund welcoming arms, the broad hollowed seat, the braced legs of this chair that so sensibly conforms itself to the human anatomy instead of trying to bend the anatomy to its own elegances, one can almost believe it.

The river Wye, which gave Wycombe its name, is an unobtrusive stream. Yet this stream—and the chalk hills—are the true makers of the good fortune of this fortunate town.

Domesday Book records six mills on the Wye. One of High Wycombe's mills is still grinding corn. But Robert Jarvis, the Jolly Miller of Pann Mill, was, I found, sometimes less than jolly. He'd been a miller all his life. "More's the pity, I say. No profit in it now." But things had, he admitted, been looking up a bit for the small miller since it had been national policy to grow more cereals at home.

Behind us, in the darkness, the old wheel splashed and trundled. It still ground the miller's oats and barley, though for his wheat he had an electric motor. And the miller's modernizing son, John, demobbed from the Commandos, has ripped out the old floor joists and put in steel girders. The whole front of the mill had been reconstructed as well, though the town and country planning officer had put in a plea for the little old windows. "Ought to have tried coming here and working by the light of 'em," said the miller scornfully.

Through the open door we looked out over the Rye, a magnificent green space, sweeping back from the road and the little stream to where the valley begins to rise in a beech-clad hillside. Not so long ago, every settled inhabitant of High Wycombe possessed the right to graze two cows and a heifer in the daytime on this common land. But now it is a public recreation ground.

Pann Mill has become a bus stop. But still the old water-wheel turns. Still its measured pace is the pace of High Wycombe's history. It was turning, probably, in the fourteenth century, when ambitious princelings still struggled for the throne of England, and High Wycombe was a thriving centre of the great wool trade, its life regulated by its guilds of weavers, fullers, dyers and tailors.

It was turning, still, when, under the Tudors, the nation found itself, and in High Wycombe the woollen industry gave place to the making of Buckinghamshire pillow lace. Lace lasted a long time—even now you find an old woman here and there who keeps alive the tradition.

Mrs. Rixson was out when I called at Portobello Cottage in the village of Lacey Green, but her lace-making pillow lay, carefully covered, on the sideboard in the sitting-room. Fred Rixson lifted it down gingerly and showed it to me, a short, blue velvet cushion, stuffed with straw, bearing an intricate pattern of coloured pins. There was a small strip of finished lace, and then scores of threads and their bobbins, hanging down, dangling like some exotic necklace.

"Only the other week she sent off some handkerchief borders to Australia," said Fred Rixson, a bodger in Monkton Wood till his leg began to give trouble. "You know, even in my lifetime I can remember the time when every cottage had a pillow. My wife's grandmother had to sit and make lace to pay the rent. . . ."

And that, indeed, was the classic pattern of the valley. When bodging, a seasonal occupation at the best, fell off, it was the women who kept the homes going, sitting at the doors of their cottages, their pillows on their knees and the bobbins flying. In the winter, when they couldn't afford coal, they would keep warm by putting a "shock-pot" of burning charcoal under their cane-seated chairs, pulling their voluminous skirts around it.

Educationally as well as economically, the lace industry played an important part in the making of High Wycombe. For the valley was full of "lace schools," whose proprietors undertook to teach their boy and girl employees the three Rs while their fingers were busy with the bobbins.

But fashions change, in clothing as in furniture. And now, to study the Buckinghamshire pillow lace industry, you must go to the High Wycombe museum, where the finely carved lace bobbins hang in carefully catalogued rows. It was, it seems, the pretty custom to give bobbins as presents, and many of them have names burned on their stems: "Thomas" . . . "Daniel Bushby, My Dear Father" . . . "Joseph Castle, Hung 1860" . . . Stimulated by this exhibition, and by the enthusiasm of the curator, who, when not bodger-watching, is engaged in energetic inquiries about lace pillow-pins, a score of High Wycombe people, young and old, male and female, have taken up lace-making for fun.

Angry Mobs Had Gathered

Wool . . . lace . . . bodging . . . and then, most disturbing event in England's life since the Black Death, the harnessing of steam power. On Flackwell Heath, a hilly spur between the curves of the Wye and the Thames, angry mobs gathered to march on the papermill at Loudwater below, where one of the hated new steam engines was already laboriously clanking. But the moment of danger had passed. High Wycombe's good fortune did not desert it even now. Through the storms and stresses of the industrial revolution, the town sailed, as ever, on even keel.

At Pann Mill, the old water-wheel went on turning.

In the year 1832 the electors of High Wycombe had rejected a florid young man named Disraeli at the outset of his political career. But by 1848, having just turned Sir Robert Peel out of the leadership of the Conservative Party, that fantastic Jew was back again, fulfilling his ambition to become an English landed proprietor. Borrowing £25,000 from a noble colleague, he had purchased the manor of Hughenden, on the outskirts of the town.

Hughenden, too, is a bus stop now. The peacocks are gone from the terrace ("My dear lady, you cannot have a terrace without peacocks") and—the "two nations" having moved somewhat closer together—the south of the estate is a public park where Sergeant A. V. Higginson, the National Trust custodian, is much plagued by the High Wycombe small boys.

But the inside of the big house, bowered in trees on the hilltop, is much as it was when Disraeli lived—the two pictures of his parents over the mantelpiece, the desk chair made for him in the town, on the desk, the black-edged notepaper he went on using nine years after the death of his wife, Mary Ann, and, near it, the withered primroses Queen Victoria had sent to her favourite Prime Minister's funeral.

Inscribed By The Queen

Beside the long rows of Mary Ann's household account books stood a copy of the Queen's Journal of Life in the Highlands. Higginson took it down, and showed me the inscription inside the cover in the Queen's own hand. He indicated the pages. "See, all uncut. Now I often wonder, did she notice *that* when she was here?"

When the master of Hughenden died, full of honour, in the year 1881, High Wycombe had ten thousand inhabitants and the population had already embarked on the first of its long series of upward bounds. Production was no longer geared to the laborious pace of the pit-sawyers who, working in the woods like the bodgers, cut the trees into planks by hand, one man on top steering the long pit-saw with a "tiller," the other pulling his heart out in the deep trench below.

Now steam-power was being harnessed to the chairmakers' tools. The old wooden workshops were coming down and all over the town small brick

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NEXT WEEK . . . Harry Hopkins reports from

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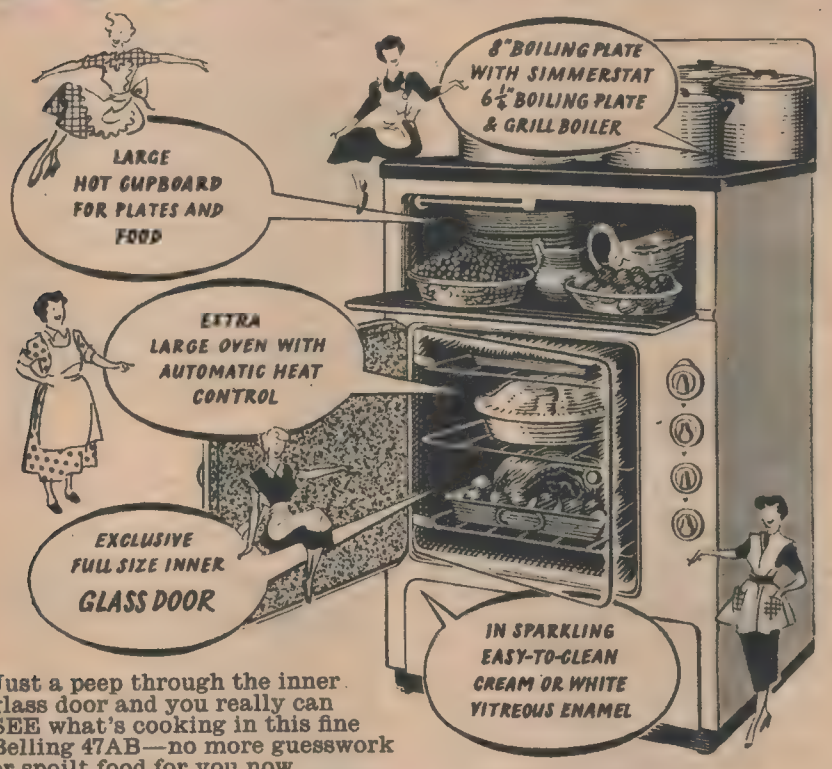
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factories were going up in their place.

Yet High Wycombe still retained its incorrigible English habit of taking its revolutions for granted. The next one—and the place is still living through it—was set in train by the first World War, when High Wycombe's furniture factories were turned over to the production of ammunition boxes, gunwheel parts, aeroplane wings and wooden rifles for training Kitchener's army.

On an industry still often not very far from the village carpenter outlook, the needs of war enforced standardization and the beginnings of mass-production—the lesson of the Tin-Lizzie, Henry Ford's Model T, then being slowly learned all over the world. But it took a second World War—and the wartime Utility furniture scheme—before that epoch-making lesson was properly absorbed in High Wycombe.

Masters Of The Past

Since 1945, however, the transformation has been striking. Before the war, the family firm of Parker-Knolls were turning out hundreds of different sorts of chairs. I was shown their remarkable private museum of period chairs, gathered together over seventy years to inspire their designers and craftsmen. "The lifeblood of the furniture business," said Harry Parker devoutly, as we passed between the richly varied ranks. Yet, the fact was that, in the factory behind, production lines were concentrated on just five models.

The Robespierre of this revolution, the Ford of High Wycombe, is a thickset, bustling, voluble little man with bushy eyebrows who, though he is now a British subject, and has lived the greater part of his life in High Wycombe, has yet somehow remained unmistakably a true son of his native Italy. In this slow-moving valley, so long dominated by the old chairmaking families, the descendants of the bodgers of the woods, Lucian Ercolani's fabulous enterprise has become a by-word.

Perhaps his most spectacular feat was to mechanize, to Fordize, the production of that homely local product, the Windsor chair. This was a bold undertaking because the Windsor is a highly idiosyncratic product, full of odd angles well adapted to the simple tools of a country carpenter but ill-suited to the needs of high-speed, mass-production machines.

Three Chairs A Minute

But the machines were devised. They were given their nicknames . . . "The Elephant" . . . "The Tabernacle" and so on. The production lines were laid down. And I stood in the big factory rising up the hill behind the London Road, and watched Ercolani's Windsor chair, modernized, streamlined a little, yet true to its inspiration, coming off the conveyor rollers at the rate of three a minute. And—such is the power of mass-production techniques rigorously applied—a mere handful of men in this one shop were turning out something like three-quarters of all the Windsor chairs being made in Great Britain.

At one end of the sideboard line I paused to watch a couple of men catch hold of a sideboard frame, shove it in a jig, nail on the back with power-hammers, and send it rolling on down the line in a matter of seconds. "Normally," said one of Ercolani's managers, "a craftsman uses one of his hands to hold the article. We plan so that he always has two hands free to work with."

Into the jig . . . on with the back . . . tap-tap-tap . . . down the line it goes. . . .

"Working in the traditional way it would take these cabinet-makers twelve hours to make that sideboard," said the manager. "Organized this way, we do it in as many minutes."

Into the jig . . . on with the back . . . tap-tap-tap . . . down the line it goes. . . .

Yes, but what would become of that kindly, ruminative look on the faces of the men who work with wood? What of the independent craftsman, working at his own pace, not the machine's, the man who owned himself, who built the first trade unions, who gave democracy meaning in industrial Britain? Nowhere are the great human problems posed by the present stage of mass production brought more sharply home than in this industry—and in High Wycombe, this village that grew up in a hurry.

But the balance sheet is complex, and unbalanced yet. It has many gains as well as losses. The product must be considered as well as its maker. "Anyone who's worked on a bench," said my guide, "anyone will tell you that you pass a lot of shoddy. All except the very best craftsmen are fallible; the machine isn't. We work in wood to engineering tolerances. And, saving money on the first processes, we can afford to spend more on the finishing."

Ercolani himself had first come to High Wycombe as a teacher of design at the technical school. Son of a Salvation Army missioner, he had come to Britain from Italy as a small child. Since Bethnal Green, London, then as now, was a thriving furniture centre, he had gone on to study designing at the Shoreditch Technical Institute. And it was as a designer that he still talked of his mission.

"Of course, there's always been cheap furniture—of a sort. What we want to do is to make stuff at a price within the range of a railway porter's wife, but which a bank manager's wife would be glad to have in her house. . . ." He seized a piece of paper and began to draw on it in thick black lines. He drew the outline of two Gothic lancet windows. "What makes them so wonderful? Not this, NOT the stonework here. No. What do you see? You see the *spaces*, the SPACES, BEAUTIFUL SPACES. . . ."

Test Of Good Design

He darted across to one of his modernized, mass-produced Windsor chairs, outlining with his finger the spaces between the legs and their supports, between the arms and the seat. "See, it is the same with chairs. The spaces, LOVELY SPACES. See, whichever way you turn that chair, you still see lovely spaces. That is the test of good design, the lovely spaces."

Nothing underlines this latest of High Wycombe's quiet revolutions more boldly than the town's postwar employment figures. Whereas before the war fourteen thousand men—one-half of the total insured population—worked in the town's furniture industry, today the figure has fallen to seven thousand. But those seven thousand men are turning out more furniture than double their number before the war.

Too often, such advances have exacted a heavy price in human suffering. But High Wycombe's luck has held. For once, the real nature of the change, as certainly increasing the national wealth as the discovery of a new mine, is visible to all.

The prosperity of the town has increased. The displaced workers have been absorbed by the new light industries that have been moving into the town since the thirties. "Everything from cosmetics and air-compressors to

THE MAN WHO LEADS A LEGION OF THE YOUNG

An intimate profile of LORD ROWALLAN The Chief Scout

IN JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK

postage-stamp printing and paper bags," says Charlie Ward, cheerfully. "We have a lot to be grateful for."

And none is in a better position to know than Ward, regional organizer of Nufto, the furniture trade operatives' union, which boasts a ninety-eight per cent membership.

About 1830, another reporter, William Cobbett, on an earlier journey into Britain, passed through High Wycombe and duly noted in his *Rural Rides*: "Wycombe is a very fine and very clean market town; the people all looking extremely well. . . ."

That could still stand today. And there you have the great difference between the towns of the north, utterly overwhelmed in the industrial avalanche that descended upon them, and the more fortunate towns of the south, whose problems kept their human scale, where the past does not oppress the present, but enriches it.

Town With A Double Life

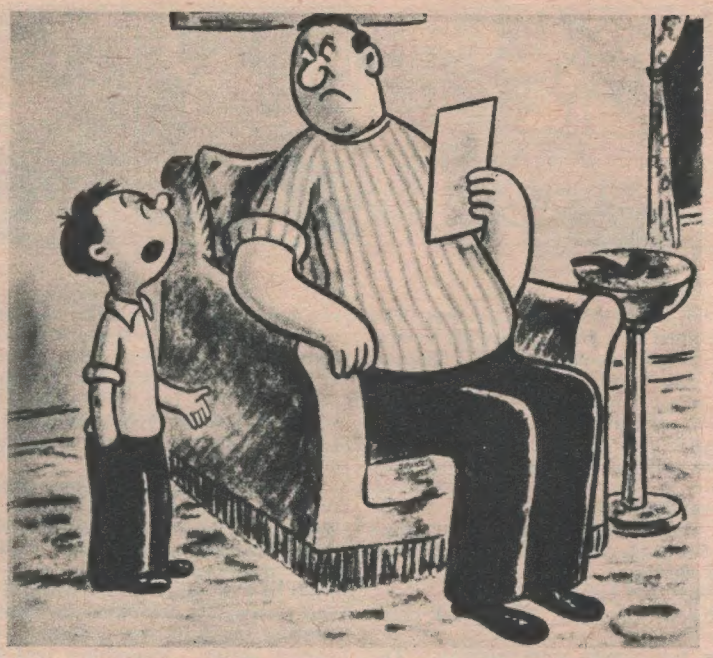
High Wycombe remains a town with two centres, one of the eighteenth century, one of the twentieth, one at one end of the High Street, the other at the other; and all the time, life flows between them.

On Saturdays, the Earl of Shelburne's Old Guildhall comes to vivid life (and the motorists' curses reach their weekly crescendo) as the market swirls around its pillars and Clem Cousins, coming down from the Old Folks Club above the Little Market House, confronts a stout woman in an apron, dispensing winkles and vinegar.

But though his Guildhall still serves as a market place and faithfully blocks the traffic in A40, the old seat of the Earl, Wycombe Abbey, is a girls' public school now (fees: £250 per annum); and at the other end of the town, West Wycombe House (though the Dashwoods still live there) has been taken over by the National Trust.

But the monstrous six-sided mausoleum which the mad, bad, or merely permanently adolescent Sir Francis Dashwood, built to receive his fellow-friars of the Black Brotherhood of Medmenham, still stands on its hill-top, beside the church, its tower crowned by the great gilded ball inside which he liked to sit with his cronies getting fuddled on milk-punch.

If the past can still assert its claim in High Wycombe, for most of the week



"It's a teacher's job to teach. Why blame *me* if she failed?"

activity is strongest at the other end of the High Street, around the cheerful modern town centre which reflects the progressive spirit of the borough.

High Wycombe is proud of its civic vigour. Before the war it set about sweeping away the stunted cottage terraces that crowded the centre of the town, a heritage of its over-rapid growth in the nineties. Since then, the red roofs of its new housing estate have climbed up and down its seven hills. Its total of permanent houses built since the war is, size for size, one of the highest of any town in England.

In the thirties the council anticipated the Butler Act by building a fine modern school; then anticipated Mr. Bevan by erecting a fine new health centre on the edge of the Rye. And they claim to have the only modern police station in the county.

This virtue, alas, was scarcely rewarded. For, with postwar national reorganization, the civic leaders of High Wycombe have had the bitter experience of seeing their powers one by one whittled away. Their fine modern school passed to the control of the county. Their hospitals went to the regional board. The town police force also ceased to be, and reports went no longer to the Watch Committee but to county headquarters at Aylesbury.

But there *is* one report which the police of High Wycombe continue, nevertheless, to make to the mayor and corporation—a report on their collective and individual poundage.

Each May, when the annual council meeting has elected the new mayor, Detective-Inspector Savin sets up the civic scales beneath the arches of the Guildhall and (a careful man) checks them for accuracy. According to protocol the mayor is weighed first.

His Worship steps on to the scales. The inspector, with the expertise that comes from years of weighing mayors, jiggles the bar, makes up his mind, writes the verdict on a paper ticket.

"Oyez! Oyez!" yells Mr. Bowles the Beadle, ringing his bell and proclaiming the statistics to the assembled citizenry. "Oyez! Oyez! Eleven stone four—and some more!"

Methodically the inspector works his way through the civic list, the mayor, the mayoress (if willing), the Hon. Recorder, the town clerk, the aldermen, in order of seniority, councillors, officials. Results are carefully recorded, the annual rise or fall calculated.

In a pink file that reposes in a drawer in the police station, the whole massive drama can be traced down the years. One can observe, for instance, that His Worship Charles Ward gained five pounds net in his first term of office, while his mayoress, Mrs. Ward, emerged a pound lighter. One can trace the impressive ascent of the former chief constable, Mr. W. T. Jones—now, appropriately enough, the town's Inspector of Weights and Measures—to the record and truly magnificent peak of 18 stone 4 lb. in 1923, and his subsequent slow descent through the years that followed.

America Follows Suit

No one seems to know how this ancient and charming custom originated, though there is a story—and I cannot think of a less likely one—that it arose out of the maternal solicitude expressed by Queen Elizabeth I during a visit to the town. However that may be, inquiries flow in from all parts of the world, and not long ago the citizens of Minneapolis were so carried away by their enthusiasm for the idea that, at their urgent request, the town clerk of High Wycombe air-expressed a suitable pair of scales, obtained from a neighbouring racecourse.

The High Wycombe affair is, however, rough and ready compared with the polished version put on in Minneapolis. Sheriff Ed Ryan, unlike Inspector Savin, was equipped with a suitable archaic script and the proceedings were rounded off by soft music from the Minneapolis Court House Quintet. High Wycombe, though, it must be confessed, a trifle mystified by this news, was nevertheless well content to add to its well-established export of reproduction chairs a quite new line in reproduction history. THE END

ABOVE US THE WAVES

Continued from page 9

sound. Clearly visible in it, less than two cables' distance away, a little rowing boat pulled across the current. It was coming straight for the Arthur. Larsen made a backward swoop with his arm and the charioteers vanished below.

The boat came nearer. Larsen and Björnöy watched its approach from the rail. As it closed the last few yards, the man who rowed it stood up and turned round, his painter in his hand.

He was an old, shabby-looking man in oily dungarees. As he threw the rope up, his face disclosed a stubbly beard and a pair of sharp if rheumy eyes. An inquisitive type, thought Larsen, and probably a talker.

"What sort of people are you to tie up in *this* place?" After getting his rope fast the old fellow had sat down on the thwart as if for a good yarn.

"Fishermen. We've got engine trouble." Larsen had nothing to lose by being polite at this stage.

"And I expect those are your nets?" He jerked his head at the pile of netting that had covered the chariots.

"Naturally."

"What sort of fish do you go after then? And Heavens! what on earth is that?"

Larsen's heart jumped a beat. The old man was upright, peering down to where the sun, shining through the shallow water, glinted on one of the steely wire hawsers. Before he could be answered he discovered something else. He was hooked over his boat now, his face almost in the sea. The men knew only too well what he saw: the long, slim shapes of the torpedoes.

"How marvellous!" The voice came up after a long whistle and much nodding of the head. "And what are *they* for, may I ask?"

There was not as much genuine surprise in the upraised face as Larsen would have liked. And his rehearsed answer, when it came, seemed to him to be very unconvincing. "It's a device we use for exploding mines."

"Ah." The old man nodded again. "You blokes go about with the Germans, perhaps?"

"That's right."

"Think of that! You boys see some queer do's with the Germans, eh?"

Larsen couldn't decide if this was said with envy or reproach. He was still in doubt as to which side this old man of the sea favoured.

"You got some Germans aboard?"

"They're below. Asleep," said Björnöy.

Just An Old Cadger

The old man spat a thread of brown tobacco juice into the sea. He frowned, as if meditating deeply. It was vital, above all, that he should not ask himself aboard, for the point-blank refusal he would get could not but arouse his suspicions. Larsen waited warily for the next move. It was the last one he expected.

"Old bones need fat, boys. Butter's terribly scarce these days. . . ." All the cadger's nervousness was in his voice. Larsen could have shouted with relief. He nodded to Björnöy, who went below to return with a handsome slab. The old sailor could hardly believe his eyes.

"So much! Thanks. Thanks. Many thanks." In haste to be off, as if the gift might be retrieved, he began to untie the painter from the rail.

But the turn was Larsen's now. He asked the old man his name and where he came from. He asked about his family and his friends and his job. In five minutes he discovered that the old man had a daughter, that she was married, and where she could be found. The details came out readily; the old fellow was beginning to enjoy himself. Then Larsen changed his tone.

"Listen, you old crock," he said raspingly. "If you tell a soul what you have seen this morning, you won't have many hours to live. Neither you nor your daughter, nor her husband. We know where you live, and if you talk—we'll find you. Understand?" Larsen drew himself up the rail with terrible menace. "Now . . . GET OUT!"

The effect of his Germanic roaring was dramatic. The old sailor loosed his painter so wildly that he nearly fell into the sea. Muttering incoherently, he grabbed the oars and pulled away as fast as his arms would let him. The laughter of Arthur's company seemed to make him row the faster.

Larsen's cool thinking had averted a situation which might have ended in violence or worse. It had ended in hilarity, but much time had been wasted. There was no hope now of getting near the Tirpitz that day.

With time on his hands—for it might be safer to lie up in the shelter of the cove than to anchor in mid-channel—Larsen ordered a thorough check of the smack. Certain compromising pieces of equipment had to be jettisoned.

Strand, the telegraphist, stripped the wireless transmitter and packed it ready to be sunk in deep water. Then each man on board went through his possessions minutely; any papers and odds and ends of British origin had to disappear. A cigarette packet, a stamp, the name on a sweet wrapping—any such trifle could have given the game away. A bulky packet of rubbish was bundled into a weighted canvas bag.

The machine gun was brought down from the deck and stowed below. The divers inspected their equipment and tested the oxygen bottles. The Arthur, in fact, was being cleared for action.

At noon the anchor was unhooked and the smack put out into the sound. It was another beautiful day with perfect visibility. As soon as they reached deep water Strand threw the wireless equipment and the weighted bag of rubbish into the sea. There was a lively traffic in the channel and many German and Norwegian ships were passing; a few of these hailed the smack but showed no signs of a more embarrassing interest. Because of these the charioteers stayed below; only Brewster took occasional spells at the wheel.

War Seemed Far Away

As the ship slid between the little islands of Rostvoll and Kull, he could see the people on shore going about their business, or idling on the piers. How many, he asked himself, would be glad to know of the Arthur's lethal cargo? How many, indeed, were aware that the Tirpitz was moored in Asenfjord? In these islands the war and its alarms seemed very far away.

But alarm there was to be, and of a serious kind. The smack was running by the shore of the big island of Hitra in the late afternoon when Björnöy put his head through the hatchway and called Larsen urgently. He had bad news of the engine; it was misfiring and labouring unduly. It soon began to smoke and the Arthur's speed fell away to half.

Björnöy had first thought that water

was seeping into the cylinders from the cooling jacket. But this was impossible, for the engine went on turning, if slowly. He then suspected a cracked piston, a theory it was difficult to check while the ship was under way.

Larsen had no idea how long the engine would continue working in its crippled state, and it was unthinkable to risk its breakdown during the final passage up Trondheimfjord. He made a bold decision: the smack was to proceed inshore, anchor and seek technical help for the engine at the nearest village.

The village Larsen wished to reach was Hestvik, where he hoped to find a Norwegian called Olavsen. Olavsen was an agent about whom Larsen had been told in the final briefing in the Shetlands. But Hestvik lay nearly twenty miles ahead; Björnöy was not very optimistic of their chances.

Miraculously, the engine stayed in one piece. It coughed and spluttered alarmingly but kept some way on the vessel; the Arthur stumbled through the night at a bare three knots. It was 10 p.m. when Larsen identified the fishing port; the throttle was finally closed and the anchor let go in sight of the jetty.

Some Unexpected Luck

While Björnöy, Kalve and the charioteers stripped down the engine, Larsen and Strand rowed ashore. They tied up at the pier and climbed the single street that led to the village. The only people about at that hour were a group of young men gossiping by the door of a warehouse. Larsen went straight up to them.

"Can anyone tell me where I can find a man called Olavsen? He keeps a provision shop."

A youth stepped forward. "I'm his son," he said. "I'll lead you there."

This was an unexpected piece of luck. In five minutes Larsen was explaining to the boy's father that he wanted some provisions for his boat. It was a normal request and Olavsen showed no surprise at being asked to supply a ship at that late hour. Larsen only hoped he would react as normally to the code message he was about to give. He waited till the bag of flour and the packet of loaves were being packed. Then, "Have you any use for peats?" he asked.

Olavsen, bent over the sack of provisions, straightened and turned eagerly. "Peats! You bet your life I have. I'll take all you've got."

It was the first check, and Larsen was shaken. The answer, in code, should have been, "No. I've plenty." Could it be, he wondered, that there were two tradesmen named Olavsen in the village? He discounted the possibility at once: Intelligence in Scotland would have warned him of that. This Olavsen was the man they sought, he decided. The explanation must be that he had not received the message. But he had to be careful.

"I can sell you a little peat," he said cautiously. "But—well—the cargo really belongs to Carlstroem. . . ."

"Carlstroem?" Olavsen was looking straight at Larsen now. "I suppose you mean Erik Carlstroem of Arkanger?"

Name Was A Password

Larsen meant nothing of the sort. The man he had mentioned was the Norwegian agent who had briefed him in Scotland. He took the bull by the horns.

"No. I mean Niels Carlstroem of Trondheim."

Olavsen glanced at the door, then went over and locked it. When he returned his hand was outstretched. "What do you need? You must be in trouble or you wouldn't be here."

Larsen explained quickly; half an hour later Olavsen, his son, Larsen and Strand were climbing aboard the Arthur. Björnöy had been right: a piston was badly cracked and the exhaust had been blowing down the crankcase. It was a wonder the smack had reached Hestvik at all. What Björnöy now needed was a drill. There was a blacksmith in the village, Olavsen said; the only solution was to go back to the shore and wake him up.

Larsen stayed aboard while the engineer set off with the Olavsens. The smith lived in a big house with several other people, some of whom Olavsen could not trust. Somehow the man they needed must be brought down without disturbing the others. The young Olavsen knew the right window, and he cautiously aimed two or three pebbles at the pane. But the smith slept soundly; it was not till a fair-sized stone rattled against the glass that the sash was raised and a head poked through.

"What the hell!"

"It's I, Olavsen. You must come down."

The few words were enough. The smith closed the window carefully and came down to join the waiting men. On the way to the smithy, Björnöy explained the damage to the engine and detailed the size of the tool he needed. The smith, a silent man, merely nodded. After a long search in his shop he handed the drill to the engineer. The three men hurried down to the jetty. Björnöy shook hands with the Olavsens and rowed himself back to the Arthur. It was three o'clock in the morning.

The repair took less time than Larsen had feared. In two hours Björnöy had drilled enough holes and fitted enough bolts in them to let the engine run for some hours at least. Brewster, looking at the result, thought it just as well the smack was to be scuttled at Asenfjord. Only a permanent repair would have given her a chance of steaming the long way home to the Shetlands.

Rickety—But It Worked

At 7 a.m. Björnöy was satisfied. The night had been an anxious one, and some aboard were feeling the strain. Larsen decided on a break of two hours before the voyage continued. It was no more dangerous lying near Hestvik than cruising in the open channel. In any case, every risk had to be taken now. The last lap was about to begin.

"Keep your fingers crossed!" It was 9.30 on October 31. A hurried breakfast was over and the charioteers were watching Björnöy as he prepared to start the engine. It worked at once, if to a somewhat rickety rhythm. But it worked! Larsen thought its clanking was the sweetest sound he had ever heard. He quickly had the anchor in and turned the smack into the channel. It was a splendid morning, and the way into Trondheimfjord stood out clearly to the north. Nothing, he told himself, could stop them now. . . .

Larsen took the ship along gingerly, at a much reduced speed. It was no longer a question of getting into position on schedule, but of getting there at all. Five miles from Hestvik, as they cleared the little island of Leska, he altered course to avoid a minefield. Agdeness, with its danger of German patrol boats, was twelve miles ahead. It was high time the charioteers disappeared.

Taking the machine gun with them, they went down to the secret recess. They were to leave it only, Larsen ordered, if they heard shooting break out above. The charioteers understood; they knew that every man of the crew had a revolver under his jersey.

Leska was two miles astern when Larsen sighted the patrol boat, an ordinary Norwegian trawler flying the German flag. It was half a mile ahead and was already signalling the smack. As Larsen reduced speed he was glad to notice a healthy chop on the surface; he was only too aware how easily the torpedoes could be spotted through still water. The little waves roughening the sea's skin were going to be very useful.

The trawler was clearly visible now; Larsen heard the "dring" of the engine-room signals as its captain took off speed. The two ships were drifting together; Seaman Johannes Kalve went forrard in the Arthur, the mooring rope coiled in his right hand.

The smack had still some way on, for the wind was dead astern. Suddenly her forward progress checked, and Larsen realized that something very dangerous had happened: the wind had dropped. In ten seconds there was a complete calm and the ships were drifting together over a sheet of transparent water. Something had to be done, and at once, to keep the Germans' eyes from the sea.

Almost Gave Game Away

"Guten morgen!"

Larsen, throwing a rigid salute, had bawled the greeting at the German boarding officer. The man looked up; the ships were now ten yards apart. Then Larsen saw the boy. He was standing at the rail—and he was looking into the sea under the Arthur's hull. He looked, and Larsen saw astonishment spread over his face. He looked for a second longer; his hand went out to point.

Then Johannes Kalve acted. As the lad started to raise his arm Kalve flung the heavy rope. It curled out and fell neatly round the youngster's neck. The roar of laughter from the German crew drowned the sound of the smack's hull scraping the trawler's fenders. Kalve and Larsen were laughing also, but it was the laughter of reaction.

The Nazi boarding officer was a big man, brash and loud-mouthed, but Larsen saw a small personality behind the swagger. He took him to the cabin and spread the Arthur's papers on the table. A few feet away, in the secret compartment, the charioteers pricked their ears. Only Brewster was oblivious of the tension; he was sleeping soundly after nearly forty-eight hours on his feet.

But in the cabin Larsen was very much awake. The German was painstaking. He read every document thoroughly, he made occasional notes. It was a good forty minutes before he put down his fountain pen and closed the file. To Larsen's joy, his surly official tone grew conversational. He poured himself a glass of schnapps.

"So you've been in Kristiansund lately, Captain?"

"Day before yesterday, my Lieutenant."

"Did you by any chance meet the harbourmaster, a Captain Ormann?"

A Talkative Nazi

This was no trap, Larsen decided. He said cautiously: "I've talked to Captain Ormann, yes." A great friend of his, the German went on. They came from the same town back in Germany. Had Captain Ormann mentioned him? No? A pity. Well, Larsen must mention this meeting next time he put into Kristiansund. A nice place but cold, eh? Nowhere like a man's own country. For his part, he wished himself back in Silesia. Of course, he had nothing against Norway. Nothing. He hoped Larsen didn't get that impression. . . .

Larsen, who talked little, had never enjoyed loquacity so much in his life. When finally they went above, he was almost clapping the lieutenant on the back. The hatches were off and Strand held one or two peat sacks open for inspection. The German hardly glanced at them. Larsen's salute was more of a snook as the trawler drew away.

A great danger was past, but time had been wasted. It was nearly three o'clock and the light was failing. When the patrol boat was well clear Larsen got under way and pushed the smack northwards as fast as he dared. With full darkness the charioteers appeared on deck. Brewster had been wakened and felt all the better for his sleep; he soon sent Tebb and Causer below to prepare the suits and equipment.

The atmosphere on board underwent a change. The fear of the engine's breakdown, of detection by enemy patrols, was replaced by the stimulating thought of imminent action. The weather was fine; the Arthur made good progress.

The smack rounded Agdeness point and nosed south-eastward into the channel that led to the throat of Trondheimfjord. Lights were flickering from both shores. The Norwegians identified the villages as they slipped by: Hysnes; Uddu; Reinskloster; Lensvik. This was the way the Tirpitz had come; the charioteers' excitement sharpened with every name.

At eight o'clock a great clutch of lights was seen glimmering about fifteen miles ahead across the sound. Larsen touched Brewster on the arm and pointed. It was Trondheim.

Within half an hour, the Arthur had rounded Stadsbygd point, where the channel widens and turns sharply to the north-east. The way to Asenfjord and the Tirpitz lay almost due east, across the widest part of the sound and north of Trondheim.

Charioteers Get Ready

As the smack cleared the point she was hit by a stiff easterly breeze, and began to pitch at once. This was undesirable, but the sea was not yet so rough as to make Brewster anxious. Other conditions were ideal. The night was very dark, which meant that the chariots could approach the battleship on the surface. And the lights of Trondheim, now glowing in profusion, would be a vital help to navigation.

Larsen calculated that the first barrier of anti-submarine nets was about twelve miles ahead. Once the Arthur neared that, the chariots would be launched and the attack would be on. It was time to get ready.

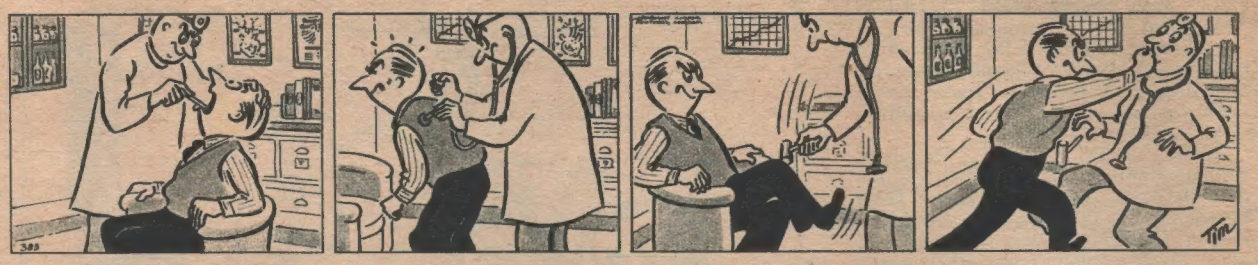
Brewster told Craig and Evans to put on their suits; they found Causer and Tebb waiting to help them to dress. Brewster stayed on deck for fifteen minutes longer, then he and Brown went below to get their gear.

They had hardly joined the others when a succession of heavy bumps shook the Arthur's hull. There was no doubt about their cause: the torpedoes were being swung up against the keel. The weather was worsening rapidly and soon deteriorated rapidly into a first-class storm. Speed had to be reduced at once. Brewster, still half dressed, went up to talk with Larsen.

The smack was then labouring right in the Trondheim roads, less than two hours' steaming from the entry to Asenfjord. There could be no question of heaving to and lying up another twenty-four hours so near a busy port. And there was every hope that the north-easter would blow itself out before long. These sudden storms, Larsen said, often ended abruptly on that mountainous coast. It was quickly decided that the attack must go in that night. With that decision made, Brewster returned below to complete his dressing.

It was just after 10 p.m., when Tebb was pulling the rubber hood over Brewster's head, that a loud tearing noise resounded through the ship. The charioteers looked at each other in

OH, JOHNNY! — *by TIM*



dismay. Every man knew with sickening certainty what had happened: one of the chariots had fouled the propeller.

It was an appalling accident at that stage, but not yet fatal to the attack: there was still a good chance that the other torpedo was holding. But the hull had to be examined at once. Brewster joined Larsen above, and the smack was nursed into the lee of a little island. Here the water was comparatively calm and Bob Evans, as the only diver completely dressed, went over the side immediately.

It was the worst moment experienced since the Arthur left the Shetlands. The nine men leaned on the rail in silence, watching the point where Evans had vanished under the ship. He reappeared quickly; a single movement of his arm told them the bitter truth. The torpedoes were gone!

Somebody helped Evans to climb inboard; for a full minute nobody spoke. They were too unhappy even to curse.

Two hours later, at 1 a.m. on Sunday, November 1, the six charioteers and four Norwegians left a shingled beach on the mainland and turned towards the mountains that led to Sweden. The storm was over and the sea was as calm as a lake. It was a perfect night for a chariot attack—but the chariots were deep in Trondheimfjord, and the Arthur was sinking a hundred yards from the shore, her seacocks open and her hull drilled with holes.

The Tirpitz was less than ten miles away. . . .

Escape To Sweden

After scuttling the Arthur the company divided into two parties, one led by Larsen, the other by Brewster. Although taking independent routes, the two groups crossed the Swedish frontier at the same place and within a few hours of each other. The march took four days and four nights; the escaping men were helped on the way by members of the Norwegian resistance movement.

Larsen's party had a brush with a German police patrol close to the Swedish frontier. Tebb shot at and killed the two German policemen detaining them, but not before Evans had been hit—it was thought fatally—by return fire.

It transpired later that Evans had not been killed but very badly wounded. The Germans took him to hospital, operated on him and saved his life. Some months afterwards he was tried as a spy and executed. This was one of the many crimes for which the German general, Keitel, was indicted at Nuremberg and hanged.

For the attempted attack on the Tirpitz, Brewster was awarded the D.S.C. Larsen won the C.G.M.—his medal was the first decoration of its kind to be awarded to a non-British national. The nine men, after being interned in Sweden, all reached England later, although not all at the same time. Brewster was back in Scotland a month after leaving it in the Arthur.

NEXT WEEK: The human torpedoes gate-crash into Palermo harbour

LIFE WITH MOTHER

Here is the missing person from the photograph on page 28. She is the late Gertrude Lawrence, seen romping with her daughter Pamela.

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FIRST complete Square in INK, giving your Answers to Clues below. Then, if you wish to enter *one* extra Answer to any *one, two* or *three* Clues, give each such word in full in "Extra Answer" Form below Crossword Square.

Across Clues **XWORD 850**

1. We've a pretty long season for these in this country
6. An ass is generally stubborn as a
8. It's better if mother doesn't give her children this
12. Immoderate these may tend to weaken the constitution
13. It's perhaps natural for veteran diplomats to think that their biggest problems have been
14. One may convey a picture of plenty
15. Private inquiry agent is one

Down Clues

2. They can, for the most part, be wooden
3. There's small wonder if men and women get rather nervous and low-spirited when they have
4. During election campaign, any parliamentary candidate finds some electors hard to
5. Folk in a hurry are apt to
7. This can sometimes be most helpfully illustrated by figures
9. Constant preaching will diminish popularity of kindly, sincere one
10. There are times when one might be employed for keeping watch
11. Hiker appreciates one that folds up easily

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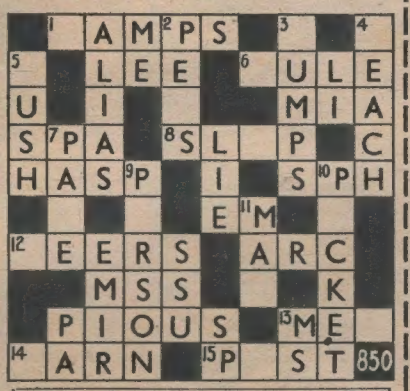

CLUE	EXTRA ANSWER	Total Fee
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A Bit Off-colour
Her Luggage
Proud As A Peacock
Lady Turnstyle
Rescued
Puffing And Blowing
With Deadly Accuracy
Alfie's Hero
Up In The Gallery

Incomplete "Examples"—see instructions

Now We've A.. .....
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Millionaire's.....
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2. Editor undertakes that all *Bullets* received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent Adjudicators.

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4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that results of this week's Contests (in *Bulletin* and *Gazette*, dated September 5, and in JOHN BULL dated September 12), also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams employees (and families) ineligible.

(See "Daily Herald" on Saturday, August 29, for early news of *Bullets* No. 1,898 result.)

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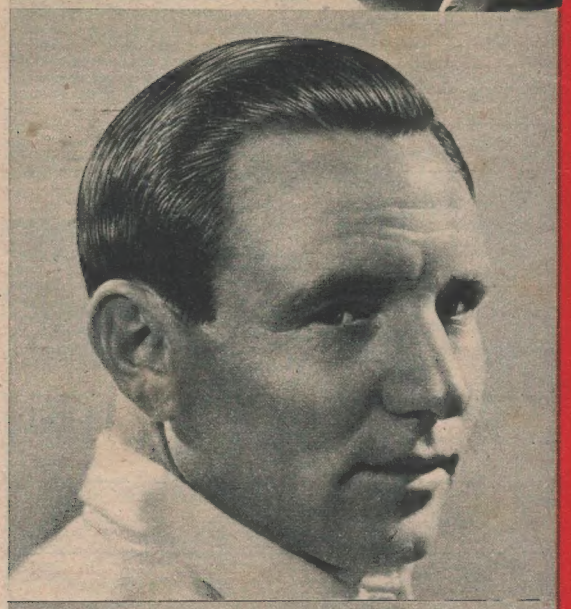

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